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THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AS TREATED IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

by

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To My Parents

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History's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness
'Twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,---
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above his own.

James Russell Lowell,
"The Present Crisis."

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AS TREATED IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

Aim of this Study

Evil is at work in the modern world. This drastic force has left its stains written deep into the pages of history. Its deadly claws are now piercing the protective armour of contemporary culture and life. Despite the fading protests of overly zealous idealists and the staggering optimism underlying the modern Evolutionary World View the "problem of evil" faces the present age in ever-increasing proportions. Across the path of all progress and opposing the attainment of the highest good in all phases and relationships of life is the antagonism of this inherently contrary and retrogressive force.

An adequate definition of evil in terms of natural phenomena and human thought appears never to have been formulated. While the reality of evil has been recognized, any attempts to circumvent the implications of the term simply reveal that many of its roots remain unearthed, or that they lie beyond the scope of the natural plane of thought, Philosophers through the ages have been baffled in seeking to discover wherein the essence of evil lay. "It has commanded their attention," says Barbour, "because evil plays such a prominent part in the life of the individual and of society.

More than that, it has been recognized that if we could solve this riddle, we should be well on our way to a solution of life itself."[1]

Many have become weary and have given up the pursuit as hopeless. Archbishop Whately has commented, "The existence of evil is a mystery we can not explain."[2] Bushnell calls it "The night side of the creation," and says further "Sin can in no wise be accounted for; there are no positive grounds or principles back of it whence it may have come."[3] Dr. John Watson has a similar comment, "Among all the problems upon which the human intellect has tried its teeth, the origin of evil is the most useless and hopeless, the most fascinating and maddening."[4]

Perhaps Professor Edgar S. Brightman of Boston Univer-

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1. C.E. Barbour, Sin and the New Psychology. New York: Abingdon Press, 94 f. The reader is also referred to pp. 47-114 where Barbour treats the historical development of the problem of evil from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to modern theology, psychology, and philosophy. See also Glenn, The History of Philosophy, 165 f. for the view in Augustine. Generally evil is seen as the direct opposite of that conceived to be the "highest good," and generally each psychologist, philosopher, theologian, or even sociologist has seen evil only as that responsible for inhibiting what he subjectively considers the "highest good." Hence it is not surprising that no one of these suggestions in itself has proved satisfactory. At this point see also Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol. II, 149, and Brightman, Philosophy of Religion, 259-72.
2. E.W. Cook, The Origin of Sin and its Relations to God and the Universe. New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co. 34.
3. Ibid. Quoted by Cook from Bushnell, Nature and the Supernatural. 128.
4. Ibid.

sity better than any other has voiced the opinion of modern humanism in his proposed doctrine of a finite, becoming God.[1] He feels it impossible to reconcile the historic view of God as infinite both in goodness and in power with a realistic view of the contemporary world. Hence he sees God as limited in power in order to maintain faith in God's infinite goodness—the more important of the two attributes. As God becomes omnipotent evil is overcome. Eventually the sovereignty of God will be established. Thus the theoretical and practical implications of the problem of evil, like the Philistine giant of old, challenge the forces of any who dare to make superior religious claims.

With these remarks the problem of evil is briefly set forth and focused. Can a realistic view of the modern world, and of its evils in particular, be reconciled with a view of God as infinite in all respects and sovereign? Convinced that the roots of this momentous problem go far beyond the realm of any one-worldly humanistic or naturalistic approach the writer hopes to direct attention back to the relevant Biblical point of view. The extent of this study must be limited. Pertinent source-material in the Bible is so extensive that a comprehensive study is here impossible. Assuming a basic organic and teleological unity underlying the entire Bible and manifest in a single though none-the-less progressive point of view with res-

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1. Edgar S. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 313-24.

pect to evil, it is hoped that most of the benefits of such a comprehensive investigation might be realized from an intensive concentration upon one of its most representative, most pertinent, and most climactic books--The Revelation. The general object of this study is to determine the Biblical approach to the problem at hand, but the particular aim herein to be pursued is that of discovering through careful attention to the book of The Revelation itself its own treatment of its most important problem--the "problem of evil."

Method of this Study

Having so limited the scope of investigation, all pertinent and available means will be sought in launching an intensive study of the material at hand. Apart from its literary, historical, psychological, philosophical, or theological factors, the primary purpose of any Biblical book may easily be perverted. Concentration upon any one of these factors determining possible approaches to the exclusion of others relevant to the study may lead to an equally distorted view. Hence each will receive appropriate consideration but the method chosen should be inclusive rather than limited and enslaved to any of these. Biblical material must always be interpreted in the light of its larger context; yet everywhere it must be allowed to speak freely for itself in terms of its own self-declared or self-implied purpose rather than in accordance with the preconceived ideas of its interpreter.

Perhaps the divergent assumptions and the many methods used in approaching a study of the New Testament Apocalypse are factors not wholly unrelated to the innumerable ind irreconcilable interpretations given the Book.

Hence in this study the approach is the Biblical one and the method is inductive. Material outside the text will be avoided except as it contributes to a better understanding of the message of the book itself. In chapter one the character of the Book will be considered. The literary, historical, and psychological factors will receive primary but not exclusive attention as the structure, the setting, and the dramatic character of the Book are treated. The latter should serve to introduce the focal idea of the Book--the conflict--which in turn becomes the subject of chapter two. In chapters two and three the theological and philosophical factors will play a primary role. In chapter two--The Conflict--first the nature of the conflicting forces will be treated. The second major section of chapter two is given to tracing the dramatic development of the conflict through the units of action into which the Book will have been divided. Chapter three will summarize and conclude the study. The conclusions will be stated first in terms of the issues of the conflict and secondly with reference to the nature of evil.

Value of this Study

To determine the value of such a study as is here pro-

posed involves facing two basic questions: Is the problem of evil of sufficient importance to present-day thought and life to merit further consideration? and if so, Is its treatment as found in The Revelation of such a nature as to contribute toward meeting that need? Unless both of these questions can be answered in the affirmative this study will be unjustifiable. While chapter three will make possible further conclusions it should be helpful to approach the task ahead with some further considerations as to its proposed value.

The modern age must reface the problem of evil. In times of general advancement the importance of giving attention to the problem of evil is often minimized and progress gradually becomes accepted as the ordinary and even as the inevitable course of future development. Recent events of world-wide significance, however, have revealed underlying barriers to continued progress which, for the most part, had been veiled by the extreme optimism of modern religious as well as secular thought, and a new realism has within the last two decades largely supplanted the old idealism. With this giving way of the optimism of the recent past to an undercurrent of realism and even pessimism, evil again appears as an inevitable yet increasingly mysterious obstruction to contemporary and to future progress. Modern thinkers are increasingly revolting against the Hegelian Idealistic-Evolutionary world view and its postulated assumptions--the inevitability of hu-

man progress and the inherent goodness of man.[1] More and more it is becoming evident that progress is not inevitable and that man does not hold in his hands the final destiny of the contrary forces he finds in his own nature and in his own world.

The problem of evil transcends the natural realm of explanation. Those who had concluded that evil was of a temporary nature such that its destiny could be determined by the efforts of man alone are becoming increasingly disturbed. While modern science has done man a great service in overcoming physical barriers of the material or natural order it has also made man dangerous to himself by placing within his reach powers greater than he can control. The one-worldly views of modern humanism and naturalism as developed by sociology, natural science, and philosophy are helpless and unable to see man through this moral and spiritual dilemna. They have left an unfinished task. A new willingness on the part of men today to look beyond themselves and their universe for a solution to their problem is evident. Those willing to face the reality of the fact of evil are again being heard by eager minds. In interpreting C.E.M. Joad who has turned recently from long-standing agnosticism to theism Carl F.H. Henry explains that

> once non-natural modes of explanation and connection became necessary adequately to interpret reality, Joad saw that the Theistic hypothesis began to seem plausible. More than this, he came now to see that the problem of

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1. Carl F.H. Henry, Remaking the Modern Mind. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company. 26. See also Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man. vol. II. 154, 165.

> evil, which for many years had been the chief stumbling block to his acceptance of the theistic postulate, receives its only adequate explanation on the very premise of the existence of a personal ethical God.[1]

A Supernatural God has revealed himself and his will to man. In the Holy Scriptures is the revelation of a Supernatural God, of his relation to man, and of his purpose for man. As here revealed God's will for man involves not only proper harmony in man's horizonal relations with his fellowmen and with nature but also a primary responsibility for a perfect love and devotion to God himself. A proper recognition of primary responsibility for a perfect love and devotion to God gives perspective and confidence in facing the problem of evil. Fairbairn goes a step further in relating the Biblical message to the problem of evil when he comments--

> The remarkable thing is that just as thought became less Christian, the problem of evil grew at once more mysterious and more imperative. . . .The denial of the Christian redemption left men standing face to face with two ideas they could neither deny nor relate and reconcile, God and evil.[2]

Certainly the Biblical message is pertinent to this all-important problem of evil about which many of these most grave theoretical and practical difficulties center. The value of this study will depend upon its ability to interpret the true import of the Biblical message in its relation

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1. Ibid. 158.
2. A.M. Fairbairn, The Philosophy of the Christian Religion. New York: The Macmillan Company, 103.

to the problem of evil.

The book of The Revelation confronts the problem of evil. In answer to the question as to whether the book of The Revelation faces the problem and contributes toward meeting the need that has been expressed five reasons for an affirmative answer will be offered and it is hoped sustained in the pages to follow: (1) The self-declared divine origin of the message gives to it the voice of authority. (2) The practical occasion which called forth the Book reveals a specific need in the lives of followers of Christ as they faced in a very real way the problem of evil. (3) The nature of the message insures its relevance to the problem at hand. The idea of "evil" in contrast and in relation to "good" forms a continuous primary thread of thought throughout the whole book. (4) The problem of evil in this book is treated in the light of the person and work of Jesus Christ--its central figure. (5) The Revelation deals with the final defeat of evil more clearly and definitely than any well-known, duly recognized, and authoritative treatment of the problem. Surely the needs of the present age seen in the light of the divine and relevant claims of the book of The Revelation invoke further study.

CHAPTER I

THE BOOK

CHAPTER I

THE BOOK

Preview of the Chapter

In this chapter an attempt will be made to set forth the significant features basic to a proper understanding of the book of The Revelation. The first major division of the chapter will be given to the problem--a literary one--of the structure of the Book. A proper investigation of the literary structure is a many-sided problem. It is hoped that the main aspects may be thrown open through an investigation of The Revelation itself and a study of the Book's relation to other apocalyptic literature. The first will be considered in terms of the unique structural features of the Book and of the relation of the whole to its parts. The second--the relation of the New Testament Apocalypse to other apocalyptic literature--will be treated under three subdivisions--the historical-literary setting of apocalyptic, the character of apocalyptic, and the distinguishing features of The Revelation. From these problems of form, attention will be directed to those of context primarily relating to the occasion that called the Book forth and to the condition of the world into and in terms of which it came. An historical survey of the setting of the Book in terms of its larger context will include special consideration of (1) the immediate self-declared occasion, (2) circumstances of the author, (3) relation of the

book to the circumstances of those addressed, and (4) relation of the book to Hebrew-Christian thought. Having treated "form" and "context" a further glance will be made into the content. A psychological approach will be of primary use in setting forth the dramatic character of the book and in introducing its plot and characters. Hence the stage should be seen as prepared for the focal idea of the book--the conflict.

The Structure of the Book

Unique structural features. The literary structure of The Revelation is inherently a work of art. The symmetry, musical rhythm, intriguing imagery, detailed colorful description, mysterious realism, and its use of symbols both numerical and from natural life, however, defy all attempts to fit the book into any fixed literary pattern. A psychological rather than a logical orderliness is revealed in the structure. The book of Revelation is nevertheless constructed in accordance with a well-designed plan. "In a wonderful whole, compacted of reasoned theory, visions, songs of praise, personal appeal, every detail of phrase and word is made to contribute towards the total effect of persuasion and inspiration."[1] Its structural unity and symmetrical arrangement provide ample evidence of its literary artistic quality.[2]

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1. J.T. Dean, The Book of Revelation. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, p. 22.
2. Shirley J. Case, The Revelation of John. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 169

"No other apocalyptist exhibits clearer evidences of strength of personality or a more manifest power of originality in meeting the needs of a specific historic crisis."[1]

That the mind of the author was saturated with the work of his predecessors is evident. There is scarcely a paragraph in the book which does not contain reminiscences of the prophetic or apocalyptic writings.[2] Westcott and Hort have found that of the 404 verses of the Apocalypse 278 contain references to the Jewish Scriptures.[3] Reference is made to each of the three great divisions of the Hebrew canon and to most of the separate books including each of the books of the Law, Judges, the four books of Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Job, all of the Major and to seven of the Minor Prophets. From the Psalms twenty-seven references are cited; from Isaiah, forty-six; Ezekiel, twenty-nine; and from Daniel, thirty-one. Thus according to proportion of length Daniel bears by far the closer relation to the Apocalypse.[4] Yet the writer has not once quoted the Old Testament and seldom does he borrow a scene or a suggestion of a vision without modifying the details. He departs from the original with the utmost freedom, and freely combines features from differ-

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1. Ibid.
2. Isbon T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary. New York: The Macmillan Company. 215.
3. Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John. London: Macmillan and Company, Limited. (second edition) cxxxix.
4. Ibid. clii.

ent contexts.[1] Hence his handling of his materials is original and independent and their use always subordinated to the purpose of his book.[2]

From the figures above it is clear that The Revelation holds a special relation not only to the Old Testament in general but particularly to its apocalyptic sections. Apocalyptic literature, however, is not limited to the Old Testament. The apocalyptic form was popularized chiefly in the inter-Testament period, but the religio-historical significance of the phenomenon involves consideration of a much larger context. The general framework of Christian eschatology, says Beckwith, was that of Jewish apocalyptic and especially is this the case in the book of The Revelation.[3] Instead of discarding the conventional forms of Jewish apocalyptic the author of The Revelation has so filled them with Christian revelation as to give to his readers a new Christio-centric eschatological picture.[4] Hence further attention must be given to a study of the nature of apocalyptic literature but first to the relation of the whole of the book to its parts.

Relation of the whole to the parts. To determine the significance of the structural aspects of a book one must see the relation of the whole to its parts. Communication is

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1. Ibid. cliii.
2. Ibid., cf. R.H. Charles, The Revelation of St. John, The International Critical Commentary, Vol. I. p. lxxxvii f.
3. Beckwith, op. cit. 156.
4. Ibid.

transmission of units of thought and relations between these units. Hence the whole of The Revelation must be seen in terms of the units of thought it contains. To divide a book in such a manner as to make this relation evident one must see and relate the dominating thought of the writer to the underlying and supporting ideas and groups of ideas he engages.

To aid the reader in discovering these relations between the parts, and between the whole and its parts scholars of the Bible have divided the Biblical text into verses and chapters. Later versions introduced paragraph divisions and suggested a grouping of the paragraphs into larger segments. Hence besides the 404 verses divided into twenty-two chapters as found in the Authorized Version the Revisers in the American Standard Version have added eighty-nine paragraph divisions which in turn were grouped into nine segments. In the Revised Standard Version there have been added twenty-four paragraph divisions and one omitted; thus in that version the text stands divided into 112 paragraphs. Also in the Revised Standard Version two extra segment divisions have been added--one between chapters fourteen and fifteen and one between sixteen and seventeen--and the segment divisions of the American Standard Version at 22:9 and 22:20 have been omitted, leaving 22:6-21 as a single segment.

Several themes are carried throughout the Book and any

one may well be used as a basis of breaking down the content. The book may be divided according to the lot of any one of its main characters, on the basis of the occurrence of its visions, or with greater risk on the basis of its songs of praise, its indicated time elements, its use of numbers, or even the reactions of its author.

After a somewhat unique salutation the author states his own circumstances relating to his receiving the vision described in the balance of the chapter. In chapters two and three are seven Epistles addressed to the seven churches of Asia. The arrangement of the content of these Epistles is after a distinct literary pattern. Each is addressed through its own angel(messenger or perhaps presiding minister)[1] but by its Glorified Head under some one or more of the symbols by which he is described in the opening vision. The symbol is selected with special reference to the state of that particular church. Each begins with the solemn words "I know thy works," continues with words of reproof or praise or an intermingling of both, and closes with a fitting promise to the one that "overcometh." While the message is specifically to the church addressed what is said is meant for all. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." Chapter four begins a new segment as is suggested both by its opening phrase "After these things" and

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 4.

by the change in subject matter. A door is opened in heaven and John is directed by a voice saying "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter" (4:1). There he beholds the majesty of the "throne" and the heavenly creatures round about the throne. Chapter five be--gins with a description of the sealed book in the hand of the One on the throne which no one was able to open. Just as the throne represented authority so the sealed book bore a sense of mystery. Finally the Lamb, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome and alone is able because he alone is worthy to loose the seals and to open the book. This segment of chapters four and five closes with great songs of praise and with worship of the Lamb, and of the One sitting on the throne.

In the next segment--chapters six through eleven--the seven seals and the seven trumpets carry the thread of thought. They proceed from the throne of God, the source of absolute authority (chapter four), but their release brings increas--ing destruction and suffering upon the earth and its inhab--itants. Though the thought movement is interrupted several times for important events, it unmistakably points to the climax reached in 11:15: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever." With chapter twelve the powers of evil come into great prominence and continues as a kingdom of or--

ganized rebellion until final judgment is executed upon it in chapter twenty. In the American Standard Version chapters twelve through twenty are thus included in a single segment. In the Revised Standard Version this long segment is twice broken. Chapters twelve through fourteen picture the dragon (Satan) at war first with the forces of heaven. Defeated in heaven he is cast down to the earth where he makes war upon mankind. In chapter thirteen two beasts rise, the first from the sea and the second from the land, to carry out the purposes of the dragon. Chapter fourteen is largely parenthetical giving a preview of the oncoming judgment to be pronounced and executed upon the inhabitants of the earth. The Revised Standard Version has also set chapters fifteen and sixteen apart as a separate segment. These are chapters of judgment dominated by the seven bowls of God's wrath which are to be poured out upon the earth. The segment--chapters seventeen through twenty--is concerned with two chief events: (1) the judgment and doom of Babylon and (2) the victory of Christ over the forces of evil followed by the final pronouncement of judgment upon them. Then the way is prepared for the "new heaven and the new earth" which forms the theme of 21:1-22:5. While the American Standard Version divides the epilogue, 22:6-21, into three segments the Revised Standard Version has perhaps rightly combined these three into one. The epilogue is primarily an attesting of the foregoing message;

an extending of the great invitation, "Come. . . . Take the water of life freely"; the promise by Christ, "Yea: I come quickly"; with the response by John, the representative of the Church, "Amen: Come, Lord Jesus," followed by the benediction. The establishment of the kingdom of God is the event to which all else points. But before such is possible the powers of evil must be crushed and rendered inoperative.

Relation of the Book to apocalyptic literature. A basic necessity in understanding the structural forms of The Revelation, as has been noted, is an enquiry into the nature of apocalyptic literature. Along side of the dependence upon the Old Testament many scholars have felt that there must be a like indebtedness to Jewish apocalyptic.[1] As introductory to an investigation of the problem of this dependence the historical-literary aspects, with special reference to the Hebrew-Christian literary setting, of the apocalyptic form will be considered. Then attention will be directed to a more direct study of the character of the form. In conclusion (of the section) the distinguishing features of The Revelation will be considered.

1. The historical-literary setting of apocalyptic. Among various primitive peoples, especially the ancient Greeks,

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1. The reader is referred to the article by Frank C. Porter "Revelation, Book of" in Hastings Dictionary of the Bible 1909, Vol. 4. p. 248-50. See also the article by Simon Cohen, "Apocalyptic Literature, Inner development" in the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia. The early view of R.H. Charles closely approximated this position also.

and the inhabitants of Persia and of the Semitic world, ecstatic or inspired prophecy was known from very early times. "In all parts of the world supposedly supernatural visions and voices had been held to be the vehicle of divine revelation."[1] In Egypt at about 2000 B.C. there appeared an apocalyptic document--the "Vision of Neferrahu." This document became very popular in Egypt about 1500 B.C. It was a denunciation of social evils and misgovernment of the land and was marked by vigorous and picturesque language, extreme pessimism as to current conditions and sudden unexplained transitions from pessimism to optimism, from catastrophe to restoration.[2] The eleventh book of the Odyssey describes a visit of Odysseus to Hades in search of counsel regarding return to his native land after his long absence in the Trojan War. He is informed that perils await him which can be averted only by carefully heeding the wishes of the gods. He is also privileged to converse with his mother who had died during his absence. She tells him of his wife and the other members of the family who anxiously await his return. He learns that even the blessed dead have but a shadowy and joyless existence, grievous to the living from whom they are separated by great streams of water. When he seeks to embrace his mother he learns that she has become an intangible spirit. He also sees the judgment hall of Minos who sits on his throne

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1. Abraham J. Feldman, "Bible," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, II, 282.
2. C.C. McCown, "Apocalyptic Literature," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, I, 418.

passing sentence on the dead as they come into his presence. Such apocalyptic wisdom assured Odysseus a successful home--ward journey and served the poet as a means of satisfying popular curiosity regarding the future state of man.[1] McCown explains however that

> Scientific investigation of examples of trance states and of automatic writing and speaking prove that the claims of the apocalyptist are not necessarily ficti--tious but that it is entirely possible for a certain type mind to speak, write, and even answer questions, when the unconscious is apparently exercising no con--trol over the results.[2]

Despite the fact that examples similar in such significant ways to Jewish apocalyptic have also been noted in early Egyptian, in Persian, Greek, and even Roman literature, this type of expression is primarily a Jewish development.

Of Jewish writings, the Hebrew Bible is the earliest collection. In common with the literature of other early peoples it is interesting to note that the literature of ancient Israel was largely if not wholly anonymous. Later the Talmudic rabbis did ascribe an author to each of the Bib--lical books.[3] Perhaps the earliest Hebrew documents were those written with the intent of preserving significant facts in their early religious history. The revered law apparently was set down primarily for didactic purposes. Records as accurate as possible of tribal and national history were

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1. Case, op. cit. 101-4.
2. McCown, op. cit. 417
3. Isaac Landman, "Literature," and "Literature Anony--mous," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, VII, 84.

kept. Throughout the history of this early advancing nation there was a manifest love of poetic rhythm and of words of wisdom such as the Psalms and the book of Proverbs convey. After religious zeal abated and moral conditions became more corrupt the optimism as revealed in the songs of praise ceased and a note of pessimism and warning was sounded in the prophetic appeals for repentance. Beauty of form gave way to sternness of warning. As almost certain national destruction approached, a new note of refined optimism arose. Godly prophets saw destruction for the nation but hope for those who would turn to God. Their confidence remained fixed in God's purpose. After the captivity Jewish writing of a more popular nature increasingly revealed individual attitudes rather than God's words or a true account of the nation. Much of this literature, such as the apocraphal Tobit, Judith, Macabees, and the pseudepigraphal Enoch, was of necessity discarded from the canon but remains helpful in revealing common literary features and prevailing aspirations and conditions of their respective times.

> What the teachers of Israel accomplished from the close of the Bible [Jewish] canon to the end of the nineteenth century has been to a great extent, if not exclusively, the development and accentuation of Israel's ethical ideal.[1]

Thus the Apocrapha, Mishna, Talmud, and Midrash have had as

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1. Charles A. Rubenstein, "Ethical Literature," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, VII, 86.

their task the exposition of the moral law of which the canonical books are the source.[1] Of those canonical books written after the captivity are Ezekiel; Daniel; perhaps parts of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, and of the Psalms; Ezra; Haggai; Zechariah; Esther; Nehemiah; and Malachi. Most of these became a part of the Jewish canon later known as the "Writings" for want of a less extensive unifying name. In the list of late books just mentioned appears a renewal of every other type of literature gone before with a special emphasis of one type which as a distinct major form of expression was almost entirely new to the Hebrew reader. It was within the next 400 years that this relatively new apocalyptic as introduced chiefly in Daniel and Ezekiel was developed and popularized as a type of Jewish sacred literature. Accordingly during the inter-Testament period Jewish literature fell quite naturally into three divisions: (1) narrative both history (I Ezdras, I and II Maccabees) and fiction (Tobit, Judith, additions to Daniel, and the remaining section of Esther), (2) didactic (Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, Prayer of Manasses), (3) apocalyptic (II Esdras, II Baruch, and Enoch). This literature is of a more popular nature than that which had gone before and as a whole made no claims for itself as equal in authority to that which had preceded it.

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1. loc. cit.

Apocalyptic literature, however, was not original with the inter-Testament period. Among passages in the Old Testament apocalyptic in character Swete points out Genesis 15, 49; Numbers 23, 24; I Kings 22; Isaiah 13 ff., 65 f.; Ezekiel; Joel; and Zechariah.[1] While in moments of high emotional stress the prophets occasionally presented their message in pictoral fashion as a special revelation communicated to them in visions,[2] Amos saw a devouring fire, typical of the destruction that awaited the unrepentant Israelites; he saw the Lord holding a plumbline beside a wall and heard him exclaim "I will not again pass by them any more." Isaiah is summoned to his prophetic work by a vision of God enthroned in the Holy of Holies. Ezekiel beheld four winged creatures bearing the likeness of a man, each having four faces, appearing as burning coals of fire, and moving like lightening. They were accompanied by mysterious wheels. Stretched forth over the heads of these creatures appeared a terrifying, crystal-like firmament supporting a throne on which sat the glory of Jehovah. Under such a visionary display Ezekiel is commissioned to preach to the people. Much of his later message is delivered under the inspiration of visions and revelations. Certainly Christians who read Ezekiel would be prepared to

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1. Swete, op. cit. xxiv.
2. Case, op. cit. 59.

hear many things that might otherwise seem strange to them in John's Apocalypse.[1]

While Joel and Zechariah both give striking apocalyptic descriptions it is in Daniel that the later conception of literary apocalyptic is first realized.[2] For all later Jewish apocalypses, the book of Daniel is the model imitated more or less closely in its ideas, forms, symbols, and structure.[3] The intimate relation between the figures used in The Revelation and Daniel may best be seen by comparing chapters 7, 10, and 11:36-12:13 in Daniel with corresponding descriptions scattered throughout The Revelation.[4] It is interesting to note that while most later apocalypses exerted only a local and temporary influence, the book of Daniel was universally regarded as authoritative by Jews and Christians alike.[5]

Of non-canonical apocalyptic literature the most important is the book of Enoch. This work calls for special attention especially since many including Charles believe it has exerted a more important influence upon the New Testament and particularly upon The Revelation than any other non-canonical book. That it was known and regarded highly by New Testament writers is evident from Jude 14. Many sources,

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1. Case, op. cit. 62.
2. Swete, op. cit. xxiv.
3. Beckwith, op. cit. 172.
4. See Geo. L. Hurst, The Literary Background of the New Testament, p. 18 for more specific comparisons.
5. J.E.H. Thomson, "Apocalyptic Literature," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, I, 164.

all extra-canonical except Jude quote the book as though it were canonical. The book of Enoch comes from many writers, represents almost as many periods, and touches a wide variety of subjects.[1] These documents, pseudonomously ascribed to the patriarch Enoch, represent attempts to mediate information and encouragement by disclosing the contents of numerous visions on various subjects.[2] Visionary and eschatological in nature, the work deals with angels and spirits, secrets of nature, mysteries of the unseen world, future rewards and punishments, and less often and in a more general and vague way with the course of human history and its great issues.[3] Charles assigns dates ranging from 170 B.C. to 64 B.C. to the various sections.[4]

In its present arrangement, the book opens with Enoch's declaration that his eyes had been opened by God. The angels had shown him a vision of the Holy One in the heavens. He was to record the wisdom received not for the people of his own age but for a remote age yet to come.[5] At least five distinct major divisions of the 108 chapters are apparent--1-36 are concerned chiefly with fallen angels, Enoch's intercession for them, and God's refusal of pardon; 37-71 con-

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1. R.H. Charles, The Apocrapha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, II, 163 f.
2. Case, op. cit. 75.
3. Swete, op. cit. xxv.
4. cf. loc. cit., also Charles, op. cit. 170 f.
5. Case, op. cit. 75 f.

tain a series of three parables all of which have as an underlying thought the destruction of evil and the triumph of righteousness. This section reflects a strong consciousness of Messianic hope; 72-82 is known as the Book of the Courses of the Heavenly Luminaries; 83-90 contain in two dream visions a brief account of the deluge and an interpretive history of the world to the approach of the Messianic kingdom; 91-108 m make up a series of exhortations emphasizing an exposition of the history of the world in ten successive weeks. There are parallels noted in Gnostic and Apocryphal literature and at places Babylonian, and in a slight degree Greek influences are seen.[1] Charles sees in Enoch the advancement of conflicting views on the Messiah, the Messianic kingdom, the origin of sin, Sheol, the final judgment, the resurrection, and the nature of the future life. Besides an elaborate angeology and demonology, he notes the unusual attention devoted to the calender and to the heavenly bodies and their movements.[2] Apocalyptic imagery of Enoch may be said to anticipate the Apocalypse of John since such common elements as a tree of life, book of life, heavenly beings clothed in white, stars falling from heaven, horses wading through rivers of blood, presiding spirits over winds and waters, a fiery abyss awaiting notorious sinners and others are found.[3]

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1. cf. Charles, op. cit. 168-70.
2. Ibid. 164.
3. Swete, op. cit. xxv.

Of other Jewish apocalypses at least three should be noted briefly. Early in the first century A.D. the so-called Assumption of Moses appeared. It is written in the form of of an address given by Moses to Joshua shortly before the death of the former, and claims to reveal the history of Israel from Moses' own day until the advent of the Messianic kingdom. Its purpose is interpreted as that of protesting against the diversion of Israel's interests into political channels and to encourage piety while awaiting the personal intervention of God in behalf of the righteous.[1] The Apocalypse of Baruch was written at a time near the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.[2] Its purpose is similar to that of other apocalyptic writings. Hence the writer identifies himself with Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe. After the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) Baruch remains behind among the ruins. He falls asleep and envisions a proud cedar tree typifying the haughty Roman Empire. In interpreting his vision God disclosed to him the course of future history up to the coming of the Messiah. He foresees the sudden and inglorious end of Rome by the advent of God's Messiah. Further revelations feature the golden age of Messianic rule.[3]

The fourth book of Esdras comprising chapters 3-14 of

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1. Case, op. cit. 86.
2. Swete, op. cit. xxvi.
3. Case, op. cit. 92-4.

the apocryphal II Esdras[1] is also a Jewish apocalypse variously dated from the destruction of Jerusalem to the time of Domitian. The writer personates Ezra and arranges his subject-matter into seven visions. Of these the first two (3:1-5:20; 5:21-6:34) deal with the general problem of evil. The third (6:35-9:25) depicts the Messianic reign, judgment, and the intermediate state. The fourth (9:26-10:60) represents the mourning for the fallen city and the building of a new Jerusalem whose glories are not revealed. The fifth (11:1-12:39) pictures Rome as an eagle receiving her sentence from the Messiah who is seen as a lion. In the sixth (13:1-58) the Messiah rises from the sea to destroy his enemies and to assemble the scattered tribes of Israel. The seventh (14:1-47) is concerned with Ezra's personal history.[2] Thomson assumes the inclusion of certain distinctly Christian passages and points out examples which apparently have been influenced by New Testament Scriptures. He adds further that the realization of the horrors of the overthrow of Jerusalem are too vivid to be the result merely of imagination.[3]

With the Greek conquest a new order had begun unfavorable to prophecy of the older type. The hope of relief from heathen domination again came to be an important factor in

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1. See The Apocrypha, (American Standard Version), Thomas Nelson & Sons.
2. Swete, op. cit. xxvi.
3. Themson, op. cit. 172.

Jewish thought.[1] Early Judaism was generally divided into three camps--Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Most scholars are inclined to accept the view that apocalyptic is particularly a production of the Essenes, the mystical group who Josephus writes have many secret sacred books.[2] Hence while the Apocalyptists were set apart from the legalistic Pharisaical party of the inter-Testament period, both sects had had a common origin in an unreserved recognition of the Law.[3] The Apocalyptist in addition, however, clung fast to the validity of the prophetic teaching as the source of new truth and to his own right of succession in this respect.

After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. Judaism was greatly altered. Charles believes with this great event a large part of the apocalyptic element in Judaism passed over into Christianity and that after the year 70 the legalistic party succeeded in suppressing its rivals and so Judaism became essentially a sect.[4] The apocalyptic element though decidedly in the minority continued until in its own process of development it came to recognize as in IV Ezra the inadequacy of the Law for salvation.[5] After joining the Christian ranks, he believes that this Jewish faction abandoned the older view of the Law and became in a measure anti--

1. Swete, op. cit. xxvii.
2. Thomson, op. cit. 163f.
3. Charles, op. cit. vii.
4. loc. cit.
5. loc. cit.

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legalistic. This conclusion is in harmony with his assumption (at least in his earlier years of study) that the great New Testament Apocalypse is essentially the product both in form and content of former Jewish apocalypses. He notes that in the former the Law is not mentioned once while in earlier Jewish apocalyptic there is unreserved recognition of the supremacy of the Law.[1]

With the coming of the Messiah and the proclamation of the Christian message from Jerusalem outward came the development of the canonical New Testament. Of the twenty-seven books making up the whole, are the four Gospel narratives, t the historieal book of The Acts, Thirteen Pauline Epistles, eight General Epistles, and one prophetic or apocalyptic work. Of these the twenty-one Epistles are chiefly didactic in nature and purpose. A considerable portion of the Gospels and also sections of the book of The Acts are concerned with setting forth in writing the life, works, and teachings of Jesus and some of the early sermons of the Apostles. The Revelation of John was the only written apocalypse as it was the only written prophecy of the Apostolic age to be accepted into the New Testament canon. Ramsay states that

> The more closely we study the New Testament books and compare them with the natural conditions, the localities and the too scanty evidence from other sources about the life and society of the first century, the more wonderful becomes the picture that is unveiled

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1. loc. cit.

to us in them of the growth of the Christian Church.[1] As with other Christian canonical books so The Revelation is closely related not only to events of its age but also to contemporary thought and literature.

But as has been pointed out the unique literary structure of The Revelation as compared with other New Testament books is no novelty when considered in the light of its larger literary context. Not only does it bear significant relationships in structure and thought to the Old Testament and to the Jewish apocalypses but also to the New Testament. It was noted that the pattern for apocalyptic literature was set in the Old Testament. While the New Testament Apocalypse is the great climactic work other New Testament material also followed the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. Various Christian adaptations and products of Jewish apocalypses, says McCown, typical at least of apocalyptic beliefs and written in typical apocalyptic manner are found in Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 17:20-37; 21:5-36; Romans 8:13-25; I Corinthians 15:20-28; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; II Thessalonians 2:1-12.[2]

Mark 13 as well as the parallel passages cited from Matthew and Luke is often said to be a small apocalypse. Case comments--

In characteristic Jewish fashion it [Mark 13] predicts a

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1. W.M. Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia. New York: George H. Doran Company. 47.
2. McCown, op. cit. 420.

> succession of terrors to precede the end of the world. False Messiahs will appear, endeavoring to lead astray the faithful, while wars, earthquakes, and famines will prevail. As the new religion spreads through Gentile lands Christians will suffer persecution, being hated by all men, but their deliverance through the return of Christ is not far off. Great tribulation is to come upon the people of Judea, tribulation such as has not been witnessed upon earth since the world was created. This period of distress, which God will make brief for the elect's sake, is to be followed by a collapse of nature's powers, exhibited in the darkening of sun and moon, in the falling of the stars, and in the shaking of the heavens. Then the Son of Man will appear in his glory to gather together the elect in the new kingdom.[1]

Likewise I and II Thessalonians are dominantly eschatological. Christ descends from heaven and the righteous of earth rise to meet him in the air. (cf. I Thess. 4:15-17). But preceding that day there is to be a falling away of the righteous and a great increase of evil. One described as "the man of sin, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God" must first be revealed. (II Thess. 2:3). "The day of the Lord" will come suddenly upon the world "as a thief in the night." (I Thess. 5:2). Christians are not considered among those who walk in darkness that they should be so overtaken; nevertheless they are commanded to watch, to be sober, and to be prepared for that day. (I Thess. 5:4-10).

Generally at one with other New Testament apocalyptic sections is II Peter in repeating that "The day of the Lord

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1. Case, op, cit. 113.

will come as a thief." (II Peter 3:10). Selfish and sneering men, having forgotten God's past judgments, will arise to ridicule the Christian hope of the Lord's return. With the coming of the Lord a new age is to be ushered in. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (II Peter 3:10). In spite of such destruction the day is looked for and earnestly desired by those who are faithful because according to the promise of God a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will appear at that time. (II Peter 3:11-13).

Of New Testament post-canonical works the Apocalypse of Peter, Shepherd of Hermas, Ascension of Isaiah, Fifth and Sixth Ezra, and the Apocalypse of Thomas may be mentioned as a few among many. Especially in the later apocalyptic works, however, was much included that was regarded as being of a questionable character and increasing excesses brought them into discredit after the fourth century A.D. Under the ban of authorities as Hilary, Jerome, and Augustine they gradually passed out of existence. Well into the first half of the nineteenth century there came a renewed interest in this form when an Ethioptic version of the book of Enoch was found by Bruce in Abyssinia from which Lawrence published the first modern translation.[1] A study of some of the specific features

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1. Charles, op. cit. 163.

of apocalyptic literature is now in order.

2. The character of apocalyptic. The noun "apocalypse" is the Anglicized form of the Greek word--ἀποκάλυψις--which means literally an uncovering, unveiling, or disclosing, and came to mean a revelation, manifestation or a book containing such a revelation.[1] Thayer suggests two meanings: (1) a laying bare, making naked, (2) a disclosure of truth, instruction, concerning divine things before unknown, especially those relating to the Christian salvation, given to the soul by God himself, or by the ascended Christ, especially through the operation of the Holy Spirit, and so to be distinguished from other methods of instruction. In connection with Revelation 1:1 he suggests "revelation of future things relating to the consummation of the divine kingdom."[2] The earliest discovered use of the word is in Sirach 11:27; 22:22; 42:1 late in the second century B.C. and it is used in the sense of disclosure of secrets. As the title of a book the word appears first toward the end of the first century in the New Testament Apocalypse and in the Jewish apocryphal work, Apocalypse of Baruch (II Baruch). Common usage confines the word first to revelations secured in a dream or by some alteration of the emotional condition of the subject resulting in a psychological

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1. McCown, op. cit. 416.
2. J.H. Thayer, "ἀποκάλυψις" Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. New York: American Book Co., 62.

state which is regarded as due to a divine seizure or inspiration or to direct revelations. Generally a desire for knowledge of the future course of history, of the condition of the condition of the soul after death, or of the character and ways of the deity was characteristic. In brief an apocalypse is a supernatural revelation of eschatology.[1] Besides serving this major purpose these books have immeasurable value as they are practically the only historical memorial of the religious development of Judaism, especially the apocalyptic wing, from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D.[2]

The office of the Apocalyptist differed somewhat from that of the Prophet despite the presence of apocalyptic features in some of the Prophets or the claims of succession made by certain Apocalyptists. Though the Old Testament Prophet often foretold the future, he was primarily a spokesman of God set apart to proclaim the righteousness of God and of his demands upon a people becoming steeped in sinfulness. Catastrophe came as punishment for sin. The duty of the Prophet was that of delivering a call for repentance and reformation. Hence he assumed that sin and evil were of man's making and that the world could be renovated through the moral regeneration of men.[3] The chief function of the Apocalyptist on the other hand was usually that of depicting the coming of

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1. McCown, "Apocalypse," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, I, 416.
2. Charles, op. cit. 163.
3. Case, op. cit. 136

divine judgment, and the reign of righteousness.[1] The present world is incapable of reformation, evil is not altogether of man's making and hence its complete removal not within his power. World-renovation is the direct work of God and man's primary obligation is preparation for the imminent catastrophic coming of God rather than that of seeking to avert the day of wrath by reforming the existing social order.[2] The Prophet gained his distinctive authority from an inner conviction that the word of God has entered his soul and that he speaks forth the divine will. The Apocalyptist on the other hand communicates to his contemporaries not so much the word of God as the vision of God.[3] Generally apocalyptic is a product of distress, says Hurst, and expresses the prophetic passion in its critical mood. Writing in periods of danger the Apocalyptist often wisely disguised his personal and local references under cloak of suggestive symbolism.[4] Beckwith further points out in contrasting prophetic and apocalyptic literature that the latter is usually universal and transcendent in outlook as compared with the national and earthly nature of the former.[5] The Prophet had been the authorized interpreter of the Divine Mind to a theocratic people. If he foretold the future it was the prediction of dissatisfaction,

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1. McCown, op. cit. 416.
2. Case, op. cit. 136 f.
3. Case, op. cit. 137 f.
4. George L. Hurst, The Literary Background of the New Testament. New York: The Macmillan Co., 71.
5. Beckwith, op. cit. 167.

of hope, anticipation, awakened thoughts, of human possibilities, or of Divine nearness rather than a formal announcement of coming events. Hence the Apocalyptist did not altogether succeed to the position of the Prophet.[1]

Of the more formal and external characteristics of apocalyptic Beckwith singles out four as most important--(1) visions and raptures, (2) mysteriousness, (3) literary dependence, (4) pseudonymity.[2] Especially in the older apocalyptic writings dreams were common means by which supernatural wisdom was mediated. Also angels often played a prominent part.[3] Symbolism, figurative language, and elaborate allegory were used freely not only to avoid danger of attack from powerful persons or groups but also to secure an impressive air of mystery.[4] Perhaps such forms and intent partially were a result of the influence of Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other inspired patterns. It is contended that the Apocalyptist generally used all available material, imagery, and symbols of his predecessors; according to this view each apocalypse hence must be considered the cumulative product of the past with new elements called forth by contemporary conditions.[5]

The literary processes employed to set to writing the contents of revelations varied with circumstances. It is

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1. Swete, op. cit. xxvii.
2. Beckwith, op. cit. 169-72.
3. Case, op. cit. 140.
4. McCown, "Apocalyptic Literature," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 419.
5. Beckwith, op. cit. 173. See also Hurst, op. cit. 23.

often difficult to determine to what extent apocalyptic writings describe actual experiences and to what extent they were creations of literary imagination. Some suggest that just as the scenes depicted by Dante and Milton were not actual visions of actual happenings so the scenes described in apocalypses were an imaginative product of the writer's art. Though apocalyptic books betray varying degrees of literary skill, yet an examination of the books themselves forbids any consideration of their author's intent being that of producing mere literary compositions.[1]

Apocalyptic works written before the third century B.C. were not pseudonomous, but by that century the Law had come to be conceived as the final and supreme revelation of God appearing before men such as the pre-Exilic Prophets. The Prophet who ventured to prophesy under his own name after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah could not expect a hearing unless his prophecy had the imprimatur of the Law. Charles thus believes that to make their prophecy acceptable in the sight of the Law and to render the books, which usually carried certain new truths, acceptable great names were attached.[2] More moderate in his criticism, Beckwith explains that because of much copying and borrowing from the past the writers often regarded their works not so much their own as those

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1. Case, op. cit. 148 f.
2. Charles, op. cit. viii.

of some great personage of the past. At least this is a common literary characteristic of those centuries and does not by any means in all cases show a disregard of truthfulness, or an intention actually to deceive on the part of the author. Especially at Alexandria did Pseudonymous writings appear in great numbers among both Hebrews and Greeks.[1]

That post-canonical Jewish literature expressed a growing ethical concern is evident. Hence Charles remarks that just as prophecy has always been recognized as the greatest ethical force in the ancient world so apocalyptic in its age also was a promoter of ethical advance. In answer to the attack upon the latter by advanced liberals on the ground that ethics is distinct from and of no value to apocalyptic, he asserts that apocalyptic was essentially ethical, and that it was rooted and grounded in an ethic based on the essential righteousness of God.[2] Apocalyptic passages from the Old Testament cited previously in this work set a pattern in their ethical emphasis. Charles believes that the ethical teaching fundamental in the chief books of this literature is a direct advance on that of the Old Testament forming an indispensable link connecting the Old and New Testaments.[3] Among Jewish authorities it is held that Christianity may well have been born of apocalyptic literature. Some of them see the peculiar

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 173.
2. Charles, op. cit. ix-xi.
3. Ibid. xi.

emphasis upon and interpretation of apocalyptic ideas as responsible for the separation of Christianity from Judaism.[1] Even such a scholar as Charles agrees in general with this position stating that apocalyptic writings of this period (especially Enoch) represented the advance of the higher theology in Judaism which culminated in Christianity.[2]

An acquaintance with the philosophy of history underlying Jewish apocalyptic writings is also essential. Case notes that in apocalyptic the existence of two worlds in deadly conflict one with the other is generally assumed. Each is believed to be under the control of a powerful superhuman ruler--Satan in the realm of evil and God in the kingdom of righteousness. While Satan's chief seat is in the lower regions, he has extended his activities to cover the earth and the air above the earth. The demons assist him in seeking to bring men under their control. On the other hand God dwells in the heavens and is surrounded by multitudes of angels who perform his will in the heavens and at his command serve as his messengers of good-will to men. Satan's activity consists in promoting ill-fortune to man, bringing persecution upon the righteous, and in directing the attention of men away from God. With the passing of time the powers of darkness grow bolder and more efficient. Man single-handed

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1. McCown, op. cit. 418.
2. Charles, op. cit. 163.

carries on an unequal struggle against them and at best can only keep his own personal conduct free from the control of Satan. Satan's defeat can be accomplished but only by the special intervention of God. This intervention is generally conceived as a cataclysmic event at which time judgment will be executed upon all the powers of wickedness.[1]

In evaluating the apocalyptic form Ramsay is exceptional. He states that

> The apocalyptic form of literature was far from being a high one; and the Apocalypse of John suffers from the unfortunate choice of this form: only occasionally is the author able to free himself from the chilling influence of that fanciful and extravagant mode of expression.[2]

On the other hand Beckwith sees in the work not only one of the most comprehensible and splendid books of the Bible but also a book of extra-ordinary literary power.[3] Still another view is expressed by McCown through the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia:

> The Christian Book of Revelation systematizes eschatology on a Christian basis. . . .Apocalyptic literature was the expression of the sufferings and disappointments of earnest believers in the ultimate righteousness of the world order. Its form was determined by the theological conceptions and literary taste of the ages in it arose.[4]

In placing the New Testament Apocalypse in a class of apocalyptic writings most of which lie outside the canon of Holy

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1. Case, op. cit. 132-5.
2. Ramsay, op. cit. 72.
3. Beckwith, op. cit. 2.
4. McCown, op. cit. 421.

Scripture, the practical value or canonical character is not diminished. At this point Beckwith notes that Driver suggests in referring to Daniel that just as there are non-canonical psalms (Psalms of Solomon), proverbs (Ecclesiasticus), history (I Maccabees), and other writings comparable to Jonah (Tobit and Judith), so there are analygous apocalypses both canonical and non-canonical. The superiority in each case of the canonical work is from a theological point of view and not from the literary category into which it falls.[1]

3. Distinguishing features of The Revelation. While the Epistles and Gospels have no exact literary parallel in pre-Christian literature, the writer of the New Testament Apocalypse is seen to have had numerous pre-Christian models he could follow and to some extent he followed them. The apocalyptic portions of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel are continually present to his mind and though it is less certain that he made use of Enoch or any other post-canonical apocalypse, he could scarcely have been ignorant of their existence and general character. While the author of The Revelation cannot be said to have originated a new type of literature he is also far from being a mere imitator of previous apocalyptic writing.[2]

The language of the New Testament Apocalypse is a matter

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 166.
2. Swete, op. cit. xxviii, liii.

which has given scholars great difficulty. From the style of writing and the diction used in The Revelation it is evident that the writer has been carried beyond matters of grammar to an innate aptitude retained from early years of thinking in a Semitic language.[1] Charles disagrees with Swete's conclusion that the Hebraic character of the language is due to life-long habits of thought on the part of the author and suggests in contrast that the entire linguistic character of the Apocalypse is absolutely unique. He notes that the author renders many Hebrew expressions literally rather than idiomatically and uses a vast multitude of solecisms unparalleled by any document of the Greek world. The Apocalypse, he further contends, is even more Hebraic than the Septuagint. As the author writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew and his thought has naturally affected the vehicle of his expression. But the author is full of his subject and like the great Hebrew Prophets of old is a great artist notable especially for his clearness, simplicity, and uniformity in his phrasing.[2] Charles considers the grammatical structure of John's Apocalypse so unique and so regular in its uniqueness as to warrant his writing a "Grammar of the Apocalypse." Chapter XIII of his "Introduction" to The Revelation of St. John is devoted to the development of "A Short Grammar of the Apocalypse."[3]

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1. William J. McKnight, The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. Boston: Hamilton Brothers, xxxi.
2. Charles, The Revelation of St. John, cxlii-cxliv.
3. Ibid. cxvii-clix.

In spite of the Hebraic influence upon the author's Greek he has adjusted to the careful observance of a fixed plan and handles his subject with a view to a definite purpose.[1]

The author's peculiar literary manner is characterized by the following elements: (1) repetetive overfullness, (2) introduction of brief indefinite expressions and statements which are afterwards made specific or fuller sometimes after an interval, (3) interruption in the course of thought, (4) systematic introduction of prefatory passages, (5) the introduction of an object not previously mentioned as if already familiar to the reader, (6) contradiction, abrupt changes, unimaginable conceptions, (7) extensive use of symbolism especially types, and numbers.[2]

Apocalypses generally professed ancient authorship. Such claims were often adopted by inferior writers and imitators as a customary literary device. "But when as in the New Testament age prophecy revives again, and one like the author of The Revelation of John comes forth with the consciousness of a real prophetic commission, he speaks in his own name."[3] The abandonment of this established tradition of writing under the name of some ancient historic character is significant. By it John claims for himself the position of

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1. McKnight, op. cit. xxx.
2. For illustrations see Beckwith, op. cit. 239-51.
3. Beckwith, op. cit. 173.

a prophet who, conscious that he draws his inspiration from Christ or his angel and not at second hand, has no need to seek shelter under the name of a Biblical saint.[1]

A comparison of the angeology of The Revelation with that of other apocalyptic is an interesting task. Of all apocalyptic literature, Enoch alone is more fruitful of revelations of this kind. Yet The Revelation is singularly free from the wild speculations of Jewish angeology. If angels frequently appear in its visions, they belong to the scenes and are there because the supermundane events which are in progress demand their intervention. Their manifold ministries include that of worshipping before the throne, bearing messages to the world, being stationed in some place of trust, restraining elemental forces, being under restraint until the moment of action arrives, and presiding over great departments of nature. No work seems too great for an angel to undertake and none too ordinary. Only one angel receives a name and it is borrowed from Daniel. There is but a passing allusion to the seven angels of whom Enoch has so much to say. The Revelation is comparatively silent as to fallen angels and demons.[2]

A number of other features stand out as prominent in the Book. Case suggests that "John is particularly fond of cir--

1. Swete, op. cit. xxviii f.
2. cf. Ibid. clxviii f.

cumlocutions employed to lend an atmosphere of mysterious elevation to his description."[1] He generally follows Jewish precedent in his frequent use of numbers. Yet certain significant ones as seven, three, four, ten, twelve, and certain of their multiples occur so often that they must be regarded as a deliberate feature in the style of the author.[2] While prayer imagery is generally avoided The Revelation is remarkable for its numerous hymns.[3] The heavenly creatures, the angelic choirs, and even the redeemed break forth into songs of spontaneous praise in the presence of the person and work of God and of Christ.

Another weighty difference between Jewish apocalyptic and The Revelation is the definiteness of the latter in contrast to the abstractness of the former. In the Jewish apocalypses one faces much difficulty in determining date and provenance. Fictitious names suggest fictitious dates. Evidence of conditions and occasion of writing are at an intended minimum. The Revelation in contrast makes no secret of its origin and destination or of circumstances under which it was written.[4] John's literary method is also peculiar in that his visions refer only to recent and anticipated occurrences. While heavily indebted to the past he differs from many of

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1. Case, op. cit. 184.
2. Ibid. 183 f.
3. Ibid. 184.
4. Swete, op. cit. xxix.

his Jewish predecessors in that he has no time to spare in prophecying events already passed in order to give authority to his predictions of the future. Rather he was conscious of immediate spiritual authentication.[1] Since the visions of The Revelation deal so largely with future events it should not be expected that they refer to specific historical incidents. While the writer obviously did not intend to use allegorical imagery as a cloak for uncertainty in referring to future history, he perhaps would himself object to insisting that every item of apocalyptic imagery is an allusion to some specific present or future event.[2]

Another factor in shaping the literary features of the New Testament Apocalypse is as suggested in connection with matters of setting the shadow of the Imperial religion which lies deep over the whole Book. Ramsay says that

> In the figurative or symbolic language of the Apocalypse hardly anything is called by its ordinary and direct name, but things are indirectly alluded to under some other name, and words have to be understood as implying something else than their ordinary connotation.[3]

While the imagery and symbolism is chiefly rooted both in the Jewish and Christian background, some of it undoubtedly is suggested by the pagan environment from which many of the Christians had been converted. Thus Ramsay concludes that

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1. Case, op. cit. 174 f.
2. Ibid. 182 f.
3. Ramsay, op. cit. 111.

these two factors determine the use of symbolism in the book of The Revelation. First, there is a regular generally-accepted and conventional symbolism becoming common among the Christians, and secondly The Revelation and especially the seven letters were written to be understood by the Asian congregations which mainly consisted of converted pagans. Figures and comparisons must be drawn from sources and objects from within the circle of their experience and education.[1] While Ramsay goes perhaps too far in identifying the characters of The Revelation with figures in the contemporary Imperial Government and hence commits the error himself which he strongly warns against--that of identifying too closely eternally significant events of the Book with temporal predictions--yet his more general conclusion can hardly be questioned. So he continues that though Christian books were to express doctrines and truths which were in a sense new, their strangeness lay chiefly in the spirit rather than in the words, metaphors, or illustrations used. Hence in the spirit, rather than in the words, conveyed by literature is the essence of new thought. Regarding The Revelation perhaps its author was just as intent upon concealing from certain people as he was in revealing to the hearts of others the content of his message.[2]

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1. cf. Ramsay, op. cit. 51 f.
2. cf. loc, cit.

Perhaps the greatest distinction goes even yet deeper. The Revelation is profoundly Christian and hence removed from the field in which Jewish apocalyptic occupied itself. Instead of the narrow sphere of Jewish national hopes there is the universality inherent in Christianity. Instead of the Jewish Messiah as an uncertain and unrealized idea, there is the historical personal Christ who is already victorious, ascended, and glorified.[1] At this point Dean comments that

> The content that is poured into it is now with the newness which Christ has given all things, Its central truth is that Christ is even now, through the struggle of history, giving the victory to the righteous causes in the world, and that he will ultimately bring about the full and final triumph of good. This opening up of hope for the present age seems to be a return from the apocalyptist's to the prophet's point of view. But it is a return bringing all the gains of apocalyptic thought with it. The wider horizon, the resurrection, the Judgment, the life beyond, and many other ideas of which the prophets did not dream lend a deeper meaning and value even to this life. Through these ideas we may even now live under the power and inspiration of the world to come, so that from the commonest actions of daily life may be the issues of the life everlasting.[2]

The faith and hope of the Church have diverted apocalyptic thought into new channels and provided for it new and worthy ends. Consequently the tone of The Revelation differs from that of Jewish apocalypses in that it breathes a religious spirit marked with the sign of the Cross, the note of patient suffering, unabashed faith, tender love of the

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1. Swete, op. cit. xxix.
2. Dean, The Book of Revelation, 35 f.

brethren, hatred of evil, invincible hope, and a sense of stern reality and solemn purpose. With the Old Testament apocalyptic book of Daniel, The Revelation possesses notes of insight and foresight which suggest inspiration, something superior to the unchastened imaginings of the mere mystic who conceives himself to possess a key to the secrets of life. In the Apocalypse of John the presence of the Spirit of revelation and of the revealed Christ is unmistakably felt.[1]

The Setting of the Book

To understand adequately any book one must place himself as far as possible into the world of the author and of those addressed. First of all he must see the occasion calling forth the author's attention, and secondly he must be familiar with the personal circumstances in terms of which he writes. The way is then prepared for a third aspect--a general study of common geographical and political influences, of current religious assumptions, and of problems facing those to receive the message--more briefly, a relation of the message of the Book to what is known of the circumstances of those who received it. The relation of the message of The Revelation to Hebrew-Christian thought is so great as to merit a fourth division in this section.

Immediate and self-declared occasion. The occasion and its relevant circumstances are perhaps most directly revealed

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1. Swete, op. cit. xxix f.

in the first three chapters and in the closing epilogue but are reflected throughout. John, the servant of Christ receives a vision of his Glorified Lord coupled with the command to write in a book and to send to the seven churches the things that he saw, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter. (1:11, 19). Thus the author's vision of Christ with the command to write and to send prepare the way for the receiving of the message which follows. Hence the immediate occasion.

Circumstances of the author. The message is transmitted from Christ to his servant John through an angel of Christ's. (1:1). John records the message as coming to him through channels both visionary and auditory. (1:10,11; 22:8). The atmosphere is clouded with the sense of urgency backed by an all-pervading and unhesitating note of an unlimited authority. The writer is at once recognized as a faithful servant of Christ and is one so well known to those he addresses as to need no introductory description of himself. Not only is the message authoritative but it is specific. So intimate a knowledge of both past and present circumstances of these churches is shown that one might safely conclude that the writer was one who had lived and labored among them. The recording of many personal reactions (cf. 1:17; 5:4; 7:13-17; 10:8,9,10; 11:1; 17:3,6; 19:10; 22:8,9,20) and the close identification he makes of himself with those to whom he writes--

as a "brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus"--indicates a close relationship between the writer and the recipients of the Book. While on the isle of Patmos "For the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" and while "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" John hears a great voice summoning him to a message of assurance. (1:9,10). The struggle is seen as having merely begun; hence, that his fellow-sufferers might be prepared for the conflict, he shares with them the divine message enclosed between the pages of The Revelation.

1. On Patmos in exile. Patmos is an island about ten miles long and six, broad, lying about twenty miles off Samos and twenty-four, west of Asia Minor. Little is known of the island from ancient records except that it was very rocky and relatively unimportant. Banishment, however, to one of the small rocky islands of the Aegean was a common and recognized penalty during the Imperial period.

This penalty differed in severity according to the standing of the subject. For the more well-to-do it carried with it loss of civil rights and almost entire loss of property with usually a small allowance that served to sustain the exile's life. It was lifelong ending with death. The subject was not necessarily treated with cruelty but was cut off from the outer world. He was allowed to live in free intercourse with the people of the island and to earn money

but all he had at death went to the state. Such, as suggested, was the punishment reserved for persons of good standing and of some wealth; but perhaps John, important in the Church as he was, had neither, and hence was not banished to Patmos under such moderate conditions. Since the Christians had become unpopular with the civil authorities it is more probable that John's exile was punishment of a more severe character. Banishment combined with hard labor for life was one of the grave penalties imposed upon humbler criminals, provincials, slaves, and upon many of the Christians too. It was preceded by scourgings, marked by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground in a dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers. Such Ramsay concludes was St John's punishment.[1] His only reason for escape from such severity to conditions permitting more ease and leisure would be his age and that such consideration would be granted or is reflected in verse nine of chapter one is improbable.[2]

So banished, John was dead to the world and could learn but little of the empire and of the province of Asia. Perhaps the exile lasted for years. (Hence his recently acquired Hellenistic habits were weakened in the want of nourishment and the head of the Hellenic churches in Asia was

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1. Ramsay, op. cit. 82-85.
2. Ibid. 85 f.

transformed into the Hebrew Seer. So Ramsay accounts for the Hebraic character of The Revelation and hence holds to the apostolic authorship). Separated from the world the author immersed himself in the Divine in order to stand the strain of that long vigil on the shores of Patmos. While most men would succumb to such surroundings and sink to the level of beasts, St. John rose above that life of toil and hopeless misery because having so lost sight of facts of earth he lived in the divine nature. But in that living death he found true life.[1]

The New Testament Apocalypse was as it were his last testament to the Asian churches. When opportunity served it was to be transmitted from his seclusion like a voice coming to them from the other world.[2] Written on a correspondingly high and lofty spiritual plane it is not surprising that earth-bound and spiritually unenlightened men are unable to keep pace with the movement of the writer. Yet the problem remains as to how far a man may rise above the human level to understand the will and judgment of God. Obviously the character and experience of John are revealed, but only as incidental to the revelation of the One to whom John like the Prophets of old claims only a servant relationship. A careful and prayerful reading of the Book itself is convincing that there-in is recorded not only a revelation of the Supernatural but

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1. Ramsay, op. cit. 88.
2. loc. cit.

also and further a Supernatural revelation to a carefully chosen human agent.

The exile of St. John must have been a particular act of the emperor which ceased to be valid after his assassinatinn. Hence the assumption that the Book was written during the reign of Domitian is in harmony with the strong reaction against his autocratic dogmatism and cruelty which led to the annulment of all his particular acts and policies. While there is much uncertainty concerning John's later life no other end for the punishment of St. John seems possible except the fall of Domitian, and in that case he must have been exiled by Domitian; for if condemned by another emperor his fate would not have been affected by the annulling of Domitian's acts.[1]

2. Author's authority reflected. But in addition to reflecting such critical personal circumstances the Book portrays the personality of an author who writes with a tone of absolute authority excelling that of either Paul or Peter. St. John so expresses the divine voice that Ramsay comments

> Such a tone cannot be, and probably hardly ever has been, certainly is not now by any scholar, regarded as the result of mere assumption and pretence. . . . It is a psychological impossibility that these Letters to the Asian Churches could have been written except by one who felt himself, and had the right to feel himself, charged with the superintendence and oversight of all those Churches, invested with Divinely given and absolute authority over them, gifted by long knowledge and sympathy with insight into their nature and circumstances, able to understand the line on which each was devel-

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1. Ramsay, op. cit. 90.

> oping, and finally bringing to a focus in one moment of supreme inspiration--whose manner none but himself could understand or imagine--all the powers he possessed of knowledge, of intellect, of intensest love, of gravest responsibility, of sympathy with the Divine life, of commission from his Divine Teacher.[1]

In view of early church practice, Ramsay concludes that St. John's authority was necessarily connected with his publicly recognized position as head of those Asian churches and not from his general commission as an Apostle. Hence the authoritative succession of leaders in the Asian churches (1) of Paul, (2) of him who wrote to the Elect, sojourners of the Dispersion in Asia and lastly of the author of the "seven letters."[2]

Relation of the Book to the circumstances of those addressed. By noting the immediate self-declared occasion of The Revelation and something of the personal situation of its author, a further study of the circumstances of those addressed has been suggested. To avoid undue repetition it is intended that this consideration shall supplement what has preceded.

1. Early history of the Asian churches. As treated in the New Testament, Asia is the name of the province comprising western Asia Minor. The seven cities specifically addressed were the main centers of their respective districts and the churches were perhaps a fair cross-section of the Asian churches.[3] All seven stand on the great circular road that bound

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1. Ramsay, op.cit. 80.
2. Ibid. 80 f.
3. H.H. Halley, Pocket Bible Handbook, 10 W. Elm St, Chicago: Henry H. Halley. 532.

together the most populous, wealthy, and influential part of the province--its west-central region. For the most part these churches stand as a memorial representative of the greatest evangelistic effort of the Apostle Paul. During his Third Missionary Journey he spent three year's preaching at Ephesus and it is generally thought that these churches owe their origin to his labors during this period.

Just as the Asian cities were peopled with those of many national backgrounds, so perhaps were the early Christian communities. With this fusion of nationalities the persistence of a variety of interests and tastes within a relatively small Christian group would not be unusual. Such perhaps accounts in part for the profusion of images, some inspired by the Old Testament, others by later Judaisers, and still others suggested by popular Gentile beliefs of the Graeco-Roman world.[1]

The spiritual condition of these churches reflected in the book of The Acts and in the Epistles to the Colossians, and to the Ephesians, as well as the later Pastoral Epistles and I Peter is one of advance. Immediate deterioration especially at Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicia was not anticipated as probable in these Epistles and was at variance with the state therein implied. At the time John wrote to them undoubtedly a considerable period of time had elapsed. To illustrate the validity of this conclusion Beckwith notes that there is no

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1. Case, op. cit. 4.

trace of the Nicolaitans in these earlier works; but in the seven letters, on the contrary, they were so well understood by writer and church alike as to need no explanation.[1] Recent scholarship is almost unaminous in confirming the traditional date of near 96 A.D.

2. The contemporary secular-pagan world. During the closing years of the first century Rome was almost at the zenith of her greatness. Her boundaries were Scotland on the north and the African desert on the south, the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the Euphrates River on the east.[2] Asia was generally considered simply as a part of Asia Minor until 133 B.C. However in that year Attalus III (Philometer), King of Pergamos, bequeathed his kingdom to the Roman Empire. In 129 B.C. the province of Asia was formed by Rome and Pergamos became the Capital. By the time of Augustus, Asia had become not only one of the most densely populated but also one of the most wealthy provinces of the Empire. During his reign the seat of the government was transferred from Pergamos to Ephesus. Smyrna was an important rival city where along with other principal cities of Asia travelers from all parts of the Mediterranean world had found a common meeting place and mingled freely.[3] Having been much coveted by aggressive rulers and having undergone

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1. cf. Beckwith, op. cit. 207
2. Cady H. Allen, The Message of the Book of Revelation. Nashville, Tenn: Cokesbury Press, 27.
3. Case, op. cit. 3.

a period of suffering from misgovernment in the last years of the Republic the citizens of Asia very much welcomed the strong firm hand of the Roman Empire.[1]

But with Roman control there came the Roman religion. The Romans were keenly interested in religious matters. They believed that from the very outset the destinies of the nation had been controlled by the gods, who had so ordered history as to make Rome the dominant political power in the ancient world.[2]

Asia was a province very religious by nature. The conflict of Christianity with Diana worship at Ephesus (Acts 19: 23-41) is indicative of the condition of other cities of Asia. Perhaps each had its local cult of one or more deities, Hellenic in name, but more or less Asiatic in origin and character. As indicated in Acts chapter nineteen these cults were intimately connected with the interests of the local tradesmen and artisans, as well as of the municipalities and of those in authority.

As an expression of their gratitude to Rome the Asians were very zealous in carrying out her orders. Perhaps in no part of the world, says Ramsay, was there such fervent and sincere loyalty to the Emperors as in Asia. Hence Augustus was almost deified as the Savior of the Asian peoples. His

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1. Ramsay, op. cit. 114.
2. Case, op. cit. 15.

birthday was hailed as the beginning of a new year and he was worshipped as the incarnate God in public and in private. Such political provincial unity founded in a common religious devotion to the Emperor had become by the end of the century the strongest idea in Asian thought.[1] It is known that Domitian went beyond his persecuting predecessor (Nero) in asserting his own divinity.[2] Perhaps it was he who first saw clearly the need of enlisting the deep-seated reverence of men for their local gods into the service of the Imperial religion.[3]

Hence the antagonism between the Roman State and Christianity was a growing one. While Rome was generally tolerant of other religious groups there were several reasons why she must ultimately oppose Christianity. First Christianity was a new religion which in any case might be viewed with suspicion. It was considered a novelty that could easily be seeking to overturn the ancient traditions with its innovations. Then too, Christianity was an exclusive religion. The Christian had found the one true way and could no longer treat other systems on equal terms. Further tension was aroused by the fact that Christianity was aggressive by nature. It was turning away people from their ancestral gods and if uncontrolled might eventually bring down upon the Empire the

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1. cf. Ramsay, op. cit. 115.
2. Swete, op. cit. lxxxvi.
3. Ramsay, op. cit. 123.

dombined wrath of the whole pantheon. The chief reason for Rome's hostility, however, lay in the development of emperor worship. Deification of the emperors had become the regular thing. Often the people did not wait for the emperor's death to begin worship of him. All over the realm images of the emperor were erected and everyone was expected to do homage by bowing before them or strewing incense or pouring out libations. Such universal homage created a powerful bond of union for the empire and hence was encouraged by the rulers. In this way Church and State were inseparably bound together. Since the emperor was the incarnation of the State, refusal to worship his image became the highest treason to the Roman State. To the Christians such worship was rank idolatry and denial of their faith.[1] Undoubtedly the persecution resulting is indicative of the uncompromising character of the Christians against such outbursts of pagan religious zeal.

With festivals celebrated in at least five of the seven cities addressed and with Domitian's desire and persistent claims of divinity for himself becoming known in Asia it is easy to see why the zealous provincials would resent more keenly than ever before the abstention of Christian citizens from games and other forms of pagan entertainment instituted in honor of any Roman emperor. Hence during his reign there comes an insistence upon the cultus more vehement and threat--

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1. Allen, op. cit. 59-62.

ening for the future.[1] Clement of Rome refers to Domitian's course in general terms in his oft-cited quotation "The sudden and repeated calamnities and adversities which have befallen us." When Domitian undertook to rid himself of any whom he might suspect as political enemies the Christians gained immediate attention by their refusing him worship. While the Neronic persecutions were confined to Rome, such geographic limits were now lifted and the souls of the martyrs cried out for judgment long delayed.[2] (Rev. 6:9 f.).

3. Conditions within the Church. In contrast to the earlier united Christian front a strong compromising attitude had arisen within the Church. So long as Christians remained relatevely few in number and were daily expecting the return of their Lord to destroy the present evil world they were content to renounce pagan society. As their numbers increased and their hope was dulled they began to recognize the necessity of more intimate participation in the affairs of the day. They began to recognize the restrictions they had imposed upon themselves by their earlier exclusiveness as constituting an artificial barrier to the new religion.[3]

Then too perhaps most of the converts in the Asian churches were converts from paganism and carried some of the more adaptable ideas of paganism over to Christianity. Just as

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1. Swete, op. cit. lxxxix f.
2. Beckwith, op. cit. 206.
3. Case, op. cit. 6 f.

Ignatius placed a special emphasis upon silence as a means of attaining mystic power and thought of the mysterious in Christianity as more than "revealed truth" but also as involving power; so other converts from paganism carried over other elements. Though they often recognized their past pagan life as humiliation and shame yet they felt a conscious indebtedness for their religious sensibilities developed through its ceremonial.[1] Perhaps many of the licentious tendencies evident in the churches arose from such an attempt to harmonize Christianity with the pagan background of its converts. The Nicolaitan minority, probably a party rather than a sect, encouraged fornication and eating food offered to idols. They advised abandoning the "obsolete decree" sent out from the council at Jerusalem. Their purpose probably was that of effecting a reasonable compromise with the established usages of Graeco-Roman society. By defending participation in public festivals and private secular clubs held in buildings dedicated to a pagan deity they hoped to leaven paganism with Christianity in these Greek cities. St. John recognized in these innovations advocated by the new liberalism an indirect attack upon the sanctity of the Christian life. As their activity was so often only occasions of immorality he denounced bitterly the policies of the compromising party.[2]

While there are indications that Paul attempts to refute

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1. Ramsay, op. cit. 163.
2. Swete, op. cit. lxxv f.

a crypto-gnostic philosophy in Colossians, the other writings traditionally considered Johannine and to be dated near the time of The Revelation indicate that this error is bringing great difficulty. One Cerinthus in Ephesus was championing a dangerous gnostic philosophy which presented evil and good as independent irreconcilable antagonists, evil inherent in and controlling the material realm and good predominant in the intellectual and spiritual. Within human nature gnosticism maintained that spirit and body are two separate and irroncilable entities hostile to each other and that sin inevitably resides in the flesh or material but not in the spirit realm.[1] Were these early Christians to submit to such a pagan materialistic concept of evil? Many felt that they could not compromise their conviction that Christ had come in the flesh as redeemer and that God was creator and ultimately ruler of the entire universe and hence of the material order too. They believed God to be sovereign over the rulers of the material order and thus generally refused to respect the absolute religious claims of the latter. Though evil seemed to be in complete sway surely God would step in to avenge and to establish righteousness even in the natural order.

4. Purpose of the Book as seen in the light of its larger context. Perhaps this background has prepared the way for a fuller appreciation of the purpose of the Book. The whole body of Christians needed assurance of God's unfailing purpose to deliver, of Christ's presence with his Church

1. Halley, op. cit. 514.

controlling in its behalf the destinies of the world and of the promise of the hope of future glory to the faithful.[1] Charles sees the object of the Book as that of proclaiming the coming of God's kingdom on earth, and assuring the Christian Church of the final triumph of goodness, not only in the individual or within its borders, not only throughout the kingdoms of the world and in their relations to one another, but throughout the whole universe. Thus he sees in the Book the Divine Statute Book of International Law as well as a manual for the guidance of the individual Christian.[2] The churches of Asia knew themselves to be on the brink of an encounter with the greatest power the world had ever seen. While they appeared to be losing courage in the face of seeming insurmountable obstacles, their Lord was not willing to stand aloof withholding needy words of encouragement. Instead, he sent his angel to reveal to John, their recognized leader, the source of encouragement and strength imbedded in divine sovereignty. This message was fitted to their needs. First it brought to them a picture of the source of absolute authority, then one of their own condition, and finally it set forth the course and issue of the struggle. The purpose of these chapters, says Swete, is to strengthen faith and to kindle hope in the hearts of the faithful.[3] This message

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 212.
2. Charles, The Revelation of St. John. ciii.
3. Swete, op. cit. xcvi.

was one vital in meeting the needs of the Christians of that day and one which has not lost its relevance neither will it become impertinent for followers of Christ until the forces of evil are finally defeated.

The relation of the Book to Hebrew-Christian thought. A complete view of the setting cannot be realized apart from some consideration of its debt to the great Hebrew-Christian tradition preceding it. Scholars agree that this debt is great but the extent of such dependence cannot be determined exactly. At least any careful examination of the setting demands further investigation concerning such dependence. Swete observes that The Revelation is the work of a memory so charged with Old Testament words and thoughts that they arrange themselves in his vision without conscious effort on his part.[1] References to the Old Testament whether direct or indirect appear here oftener than in any other book of the New Testament.[2] Yet while the mind of the author is full of the lore of earlier revelation it is free to carry its reminiscences into new and wider fields of spiritual illumination and hence is also creative.[3] There is also some question as to the nature and extent to which the Christian Apocalypse is indebted to Jewish apocalyptic works, but the most that can be safely affirmed is that the author shared with the Jewish Apoca-

1. Swete, op. cit. cliii
2. Beckwith, op. cit. 221.
3. Swete, op. cit. cliv.

lyptists the stock of apocalyptic imagery and mystical and eschatological thought which was the common property of an age nurtured in the Old Testament and hard pressed by troubles and dangers of the times.[1]

Israel's special eschatological hope goes back to two striking religious promises.[2] The first occurs in the tragedy of Eden in the words addressed to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15). The doom here uttered announces the bitter age-long conflict to be waged between the race of Man and the race of the Serpent, the ever-continuing, agonizing struggle of humanity against the power of evil.[3] Henceforth man's gaze is no longer turned backwards in longing after paradise, but is directed hopefully to the future.[4] In Genesis 9:25 ff. a second promise is made to Shem and his descendents which is preparatory to the covenant promise to Abraham and renewed to leaders of his posterity. Beckwith sums up these two hopes in one--

> As an aspiration toward the sublime ideal of victory over evil, realizing itself not in isolation and individually, but in the corporate body of a family who know and recognize God.[5]

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1. Swete, op.cit. clvii
2. Beckwith, op. cit. 4.
3. Ibid. 4 f.
4. Ibid. 5.
5. Ibid. 8.

Thus unlike other peoples of antiquity the Hebrews were conscious of divine election and of a resulting special covenant relationship with God. Through this unique position Israel was charged with a divine mission--that of being the medium of Messianic blessing to all nations. (cf. Gen. 12:3; Isa. 2:2 ff.; Zech. 8:23). Perhaps the eschatological hope of the Patriarchal and pre-Monarchial periods may be best defined as "an anticipation of a theocratic kingdom to be realized within national (Hebrew) and territorial (Palestinian) limits, but containing within it a blessedness which other peoples should recognize and desire."[1] The frequent use of the Old Testament reveals an attempt on the part of the writer to strengthen the faith of the churches of his day by pointing out the pertinence of God's eternal purpose to them.

John was by no means unique in disclosing God's program with reference to impending events of unusual importance. The agonies of the last times, the destruction of sinners, the enactment of judgment, the allotment of future rewards and punishments, and other critical happenings of cosmic importance were themes that earlier religious writers had often discussed.[2] Perhaps it was not much before the time of Amos in the eighth century B.C. that the use of the eschatological term "Day of the Lord" or "Day of Jehovah" first became common.

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 15.
2. Case, op. cit. 62 f.

The early use of the term, however, made it suggestive of a day of battle or a day of victory because of Jehovah's intervention in the affairs of the world. Through their special outward and national relation to Jehovah the popular conception arose according to which the coming execution of judgment was to be one of assured joy and triumph--the consummation of the national hope.[1]

But the Prophets beginning with Amos used the term in a new sense. They saw it as a day of judgment, a day not so much to be desired as to be feared because God would vindicate his righteous character by manifesting in the sight of the world his indignation against all iniquity, whether among the heathen or in his chosen people. Henceforth the coming of God is called variously "the day of the Lord," the great day," "that day," "the day of wrath," "the day of judgment," and appears as the central event about which all eschatological explanations range themselves. It is a subject about which most of the Prophets are concerned and it forms the principal theme in Zephaniah, and Joel. (See further Isa. 2:12 ff.; Jer. 30:7 ff.; Ezek. 30; Ob. 15; Zech. 14; Mal. 3).[2] The "Day of the Lord" is the day of final and universal judgment. Although that day fills men with terror and anguish, it is also a cause of universal rejoicing, for then begins the reign of God. (cf. Psa. 97:1, 98:9).[3]

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 20.
2. Ibid. 21 f.
3. John D. Davis, "Day of the Lord," Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, 134.

In the New Testament the idea is carried over but centered in Christ. It is the day of Christ's glorious manifestation and is connected with the future establishment of the kingdom of heaven--the hope of the Christian Church. The background is especially reflected in The Revelation in the songs of praise as well as such images as those of the cosmic disturbances of the smoke that goes up for ever and of a city like a cage of unclean birds. (Rev. 6:17, 14:11, 18:18, 19:3, 18:2).

While the Old Testament Prophets did not realize the full significance of the oncoming judgment, they saw that it would not make a full end but that a "righteous remnant" would be spared--among the gleanings there would be those who would form the nucleus of a new and purified people of God. (cf. Isa. 17:6; 7:3). In Jeremiah hope is held out (Jer. 23:3, 24:1 ff., 44:28, 46:28) and in Zephaniah are seen prospects of a better day. (2:2,9; 3:13). Hence beyond the "Day of Jehovah" the Prophets saw an Israel within Israel forming a nucleus of the kingdom of God, the heir of all its hopes and promises. This holy remnant would emerge disciplined through and redeemed out of the fierce onset of trial.[1] Through this redeemed remnant God will in the end build up in Judah and Jerusalem his abiding kingdom of righteousness and peace where he himself will dwell with and reign over his people.[2] Ezekiel is also unique in

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 22-24.
2. Ibid. 30.

his idea of a second conflict with hostile powers. (chapters 38-39). With him as with the other Prophets the destruction of the well-known enemies of Israel in the near future is to be followed by an era of messianic peace and felicity. (chapters 34-37). But after a long continuance of this era, in the latter days Gog of the land of Magog will lead a final rally of the powers of earth in an attack against the Messianic Kingdom.[1] (chapters 38, 39).

In Exilic and post-Exilic times two forces united in keeping actively alive the sense of the divine mission of Israel. One, of course, was the Law and the legal aspects of the Old Testament; and the other, the hope of a coming era of deliverance and triumph--a Messianic era. While the latter appears as most prominent in Jeremiah and forms the theme of Isaiah 40-66 (cf. 62:11,12), both of these forces unite in Ezekiel.[2]

Foreshadowing the advent of Jehovah were seen times of great trial to be attended by great portents in the earth and heavens. It was universally believed that God would and did use the operations of nature to further his purposes for men. These times of distress as precursors and accompaniments of the coming of the Messianic era were often called "Messianic Woes," and they became a standing feature in eschatological expectation. In Rabbinic writings they were likened unto birth pains.

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 36.
2. Ibid. 31.

Starting from the foreshadowings of the earlier Prophets, later writers unfold pictures of these pre-Messianic troubles with vivid and often fantastic imagery. Isaiah chapter 34 gives an appalling description of the events of these days during which is pictured the dissolution of the heavens, slaughter, desolation, and war in the earth. Other significant examples may be noted in Joel 2:1 f., 30 f.; 3:3; Zechariah 13:8 f. (one-third part saved), Daniel 12:1 (a time such as never has been), In post-canonical writings such representations abound and the traditional pictures are taken over into the New Testament.[1] Such antecedents of the Messiah's coming appear in Christ's predictions of his own "parousia" and in the Epistles of Paul and Peter as have been noted in the preceding section dealing with apocalyptic literature. The Messianic Woes--times of trouble, convulsions in the heavenly bodies and in earth, wars, terrors, persecutions, and apostacy--will occur as signs that the end is near.[2] The day of judgment is preceded by great apostacy and the revelation of the "man of sin" (antichrist),[3] and appears as an inseparable part of the great drama of the end. (cf. I Cor. 7:26; II Thess. 2: 3-10). Ultimately the Messianic hope was the necessary offspring of the common belief in a final triumph of good over evil and of God over Satan.[4]

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1. Beckwith, op. cit. 38 f.
2. Ibid. 87, 148.
3. Ibid. 87 f.
4. Ibid. 156.

In Jewish and Christian expectation the time of the end is generally thought of as near at hand. While the book of The Revelation generally shares this feeling of impending judgment (cf. 1:1,3; 3:11; 10:6; 22:6,7,10,20), Beckwith points out in contrast that the multiplied series of plagues, the period of anti-Christ's domination, and the preliminary millenial kingdom form a sequence requiring a considerable lapse of time before the final catastrophe.[1] Thus what elsewhere is foreseen in immediately consecutive steps in one great movement is viewed by the Apocalyptist as consisting of parts widely separated in time, however closely connected in essential relations. Beckwith divides eschatological prophecy into three classes centering in a final catastrophe: (1) the long series of preliminary movements, (2) the crisis of the definitive conflict with Satan, (3) the resurrection, world judgment, and the final state of the redeemed.[2] In The Revelation the evil days preceding the "Day of the Lord" were seen as being at hand. The movement of the forces of evil then at work in the world were seen as the forerunners of those final events; hence the Book is inseparable from the things which "must shortly come to pass."

The coming of the material glories and earthly blessings of the Messianic kingdom and the new Jerusalem were only

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. 157

corollary of its spiritual perfections. God will dwell there continually with his people and be to them an everlasting light (Isa. 60:19; Zech. 8:3; Joel 3:17); the covenant of his peace shall never be removed (Isa.54:10); all will be taught of Jehovah and enjoy great peace (54:13); a fountain for sin and uncleanness shall be opened there (Zech. 13:1); God will give his people a new heart that they may walk in his statutes and keep his ordinances (Ezek. 11:19 f.); they will all be righteous (Isa. 60:21); and the unclean will no more come there (Isa. 52:1).[1]

The Dramatic Character of the Book

In introducing the section dealing with the "Structure of the Book" it was noted that the orderliness revealed in the book of The Revelation is primarily psychological rather than logical. Without fear of contradiction or exaggeration a further step may be taken in substituting for the word "psychological" the stronger term "dramatic." Swete observes points of resemblance between the Greek drama and the form of the New Testament Apocalypse but adds that the latter refuses to be bound by laws of the western stage.[2] Strictly the Book is no drama since its characters are primarily actors rather than speakers. "Yet the Book is like the relating of a Drama, a narrative of Scenes and Acts which had passed before the eye

1. Beckwith, op. cit. 57.
2. Swete, op. cit. xlii.

of the Seer, although on an almost unlimited stage wider than the commonly visible world."[1] Logic fails in predicting forthcoming events in the Book. Yet the unexpected is never out of order. Elements of "preparation" and "suspense" are favorite and much-used dramatic devices. The New Testament Apocalypse is a book of action--more specifically a book of purposive and directed action towards the progress of which each recorded event contributes.

The plot. As was suggested in an earlier section, the plot of the Book is inseparably connected with the execution of final judgment upon the forces of "Evil." The establishment of the kingdom is a dominating goal which must be preceded by the defeat of Evil. The second advent of Christ is of necessity associated with this final victory. Hence these factors are inseparably connected with the plot of the Book. Two irreconcilable forces are arrayed one against the other. Their overlapping claims as to spheres of influence have brought conflict. One must be defeated. The plot centers around the victory of the one over the other.

The characters. The Revelation pictures the kingdom of "Good" being centered around the throne of God in heaven. Besides the "One sitting upon the throne" (4:2), the "seven Spirits of God appear before the throne. (4:5). In the midst of the throne and of the heavenly creatures stands "a Lamb as

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1. Edward White Benson, The Apocalypse. London: Macmillan and Co. 6.

though it had been slain." (5:6). This One, here called the Lamb, appears in many other places and under other names chief of which are "one like unto a Son of Man" in the midst of the churches (1:13), and on the cloud (14:14), as "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah" (5:5), and as he comes from heaven to earth to execute the final judgment upon evil he is mounted on a white horse leading the heavenly armies and is called "Faithful and True(19:11), "The Word of God." (19:13), The heavenly creatures round about the throne are divided into three groups (1) the twenty-four elders dressed in white and wearing crowns of gold sitting upon the twenty-four thrones surrounding the central throne (4:4), (2) in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were the four living creatures the first like a lion, the second like a calf, the third with the face as of a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle, each with six wings and full of eyes round about (4:6-8), (3) an innumerable host of angels.(5:11).

As opposed to this heavenly company stand the forces having as their chief motive the promotion of evil. This kingdom of Evil seems to lack a permanent location. The site of its headquarters apparently shifts with the success of its activity. At its head is Satan who in chapter twelve is identified with "the devil" and is introduced as a "great red dragon." Receiving special attention as being closely associated with Satan are the two beasts of chapter thirteen. The first

comes up out of the sea and receives his power, his throne, and great authority from the dragon. The second comes up out of the earth and exercises all the authority of the first. He promotes worship of the first beast and is also and more commonly spoken of as the "false prophet." (16:13; 19:20). The references in chapter seventeen are perhaps to the first beast of chapter thirteen. (17:3,7,8,11-17). In 11:7 is mentioned "the beast that cometh up out of the abyss" who wars against and kills the two witnesses dealt with in the chapter. In 9:11 the locusts that come up out of the abyss have over them as king the angel of the abyss whose name in Hebrew is "Abaddon" and Greek "Apollyon." Also in 9:1 a star falls from heaven to earth unto whom was given the key of the pit of the abyss. As to the relation of these three to each other or to the beast or the dragon above there is much uncertainty. In contrast to the large part played by the angels in the kingdom of God the demons among the forces of Satan are surprisingly insignificant but are mentioned. (cf. 2:20; 16:13, 14; 18:2).

Among the inhabitants of the earth loyalty is divided. Those who compose the group called "the redeemed" are loyal to God. Roughly these fall into three classes--the martyrs, the righteous dead, and those living who retain their loyalty to Christ in the face of the most extreme threats of evil. As representative particularly of the latter but generally of all

three groups is the Apocalyptist. He is not only a recipient but also an actor playing a prominent role in the great drama himself. His responses to the heavenly scenes are typical of normal human reactions. "The redeemed" generally make up the Church which is referred to as "the bride of Christ." (19:7-9). In 21:2,9, the bride is further identified with the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. The man-child in chapter twelve is Christ who has been described above. There is a question concerning "the woman" (the mother of the man-child), however; perhaps she is to be more generally identified with the Jewish nation or with the righteous remnant within the nation than with the general church. The two witnesses and the Old Testament characters mentioned are obviously representatives of the kingdom of God. Among the earthly forces loyal to Satan are all those persons who have been deceived by the enticive threats of the agents of evil, and those who have been led astray by the hostile world power of the day who have refused to repent of their wicked ways when given opportunity. Also included among the wicked are those who have sought to compromise with the agents of evil such as the Nicolaitans, those who hold the teaching of Balaam or of the woman Jezebel, false apostles and those who say they are Jews and are not but are the synagogue of Satan. Perhaps foremost among the earthly powers supporting the hierarchy of evil is the "great harlot that sitteth upon many waters." (17:1). She is sitting

upon a scarlet-colored beast arrayed in bright colors but bearing the name "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (17:5). She is drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. (17:6). Chief among those led astray through her are the kings of the earth who have committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth who waxed rich by the power of her wantonness. (18:3). In 19:19 the kings of the earth are allied with the beast.

The earth and the creatures of the natural order are generally represented as amoral instruments in the hand of either good or evil. Exceptions seem to be presented however in 12:16 when the earth helped the woman escape from the dragon and perhaps in the case of the locusts in chapter nine who seem predetermined agents of evil.

<u>The scene of action</u>. From this notation of the characters one could not be surprised at the distribution of places where the action takes place. Ultimately the whole universe is involved. The isle of Patmos is the specific focal spot in the first three chapters but most of the events occur either in heaven or on earth, or in the space between heaven and earth. Also the abyss, and the lake of fire are places serving as occasional scenes of action. Even the sun, moon, and stars serve the purposes of the One who ultimately directs and controls the great drama.

The division into acts and scenes. The dramatic character of the Book underlies both its structure and its movement of thought. "The Apocalypse proper has been represented as a quasi-drama, divisible into acts and scenes, and interspersed with 'interludes' and 'choric songs.'"[1] Accordingly such an arrangement as is suggested below should lend itself toward a better understanding of the Book.

Act I. chapters 1 - 3.

Scene 1. 1:1-8.

Scene 2. 1:9-20.

Scene 3. 2:1-3:22.

Act II. chapters 4 - 11.

Scene 1. 4:1-11.

Scene 2. 5:1-14.

Scene 3. 6:1-17.

Scene 4. 7:1-17.

Scene 5. 8:1-9:21.

Scene 6. 10:1-11.

Scene 7. 11:1-13.

Scene 8. 11:14-19.

Act III. chapters 12 - 14.

Scene 1. 12:1-6.

Scene 2. 12:7-12.

Scene 3. 12:13-17.

Scene 4. 13:1-10.

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1. Swete, op. cit. xli f., also cf. Benson, op. cit. 5, 37.

Scene 5. 13:11-18.

Scene 6. 14:1-20.

Act IV. chapters 15 - 20.

Scene 1. 15:1-8.

Scene 2. 16:1-21.

Scene 3. 17:1-19:10.

Scene 4. 19:11-20:3.

Scene 5. 20:4-6.

Scene 6. 20:7-10.

Scene 7. 20:11-15.

Act V. chapters 21 - 22.

Scene 1. 21:1-22:5.

Scene 2. 22:6-21.

The Focal Idea of the Book

In dealing with the dramatic character of the Book the idea of conflict has been seen as inevitable. A dualism underlies the existing world-order. Unrest and disorder are certain until this dualism is broken down. With two such opposing and essentially irreconcilable forces as good and evil arrayed against each other the attention of this study is automatically directed to the focal idea of The Revelation and, in terms of this investigation, the subject of chapter two--The Conflict.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFLICT

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Preview of the Chapter

In the closing section of chapter one the stage was seen as set for the conflict. The characters of the Book were distinguished as having given their allegiance either to the side of evil or to that of good. In chapter two the conflict itself is the major object of concern. In setting forth the distinctive and differentiating characteristics of those who meet in conflict the law of contrast is not only helpful and well adapted to the nature of the problem in this chapter, but is basic. The chapter itself falls into two sections--the first treating the nature of the conflicting forces; and the second, the dramatic development of the conflict. In introducing each of these two sections a further statement will be made regarding what is set out to accomplish in that section and the method employed therein.

Nature of the Conflicting Forces

While the basic purpose of this study as a whole is that of making a comprehensive investigation of The Revelation to discover its treatment of the problem of evil it becomes obvious at once that there must be some standard against which evil may be distinguished from good. Either of two conflicting forces must be seen in the light of that other one with which it is set in conflict as well as of the conflict

itself. Perhaps by setting in contrast the distinguishing qualities possessed by the leaders of the opposing forces the true nature of the conflict can best be introduced. Since the Apocalyptist himself sees evil as set over against the character of God and of the forces of good it is necessary that any attempt to interpret his thought regarding evil should first take account of his presentation of good. Thus a special study will be launched first of those who are most outstanding among the leaders in the conflict on the side of good, and secondly of those who take the leading parts on the side of evil. In dealing with those of each side special consideration will be given to the names used including the meaning of the name, the manner in which it is used, the context, the frequency, and other significant data.

On the side of good. In the preceding chapter the chief characters on each side of the conflict were noted. On the side of good there were mentioned the One sitting upon the throne who is more commonly simply spoken of as God, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ who act in perfect harmony and apparently with an authority peculiar to them alone. Among the heavenly creatures surrounding the throne are the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, the innumerable host of angels, and among those who are inhabitants of the earth, the redeemed or the saints. As terms referring to agencies of God both "church" and "kingdom" are used. The latter is

used however in describing the militant forces of evil as well. Among the other characters with less significant tasks to perform are the two witnesses, the woman who brought forth the man-child, and in a sense even the Jewish nation which interpreters often identify with the woman as not only the forerunner but as the one through whom Christ and hence the Christian Church came.

1. God. Chief among the forces of good and the one most often mentioned in the entire Book is that one simply called "God." The name "God" appears in each chapter and in the whole eighty-four times, most often (thirty-eight instances) occurring in the genitive case.[1] Generally the name is used in connection with something bearing an essential relation to God such as word, name, glory, servant, harps, wrath, or temple of God. The expression "my God" occurs five times generally from the mouth of Christ, and "our God" ten times most commonly by the heavenly creatures. In tem instances the name "God" is used as the direct object of action and in fourteen as the subject or predicate nominative.

In contrast to the common use of the name "God" it is significant to note the variety of descriptive designations. Eleven times God is simply referred to as the One that is sitting upon the throne and nine as the Almighty, eight as Lord God, and in at least four instances simply as Lord. In each of these descriptive designations the note of absolute

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1. Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, page 74 suggest that the root meaning of the genitive is attribution and that this attribution may employ an essential relationship or that it may employ an essential quality.

sovereignty is most prominent. Five times God is spoken of in relation to Christ as "Father" and in three of the five, where Christ is speaking, as "my Father." Other designations by which God is referred to but which are used less frequently are "him that liveth for ever and ever"(cf.4:10), "the living God" (cf.7:2), "who art and who wast" (cf.11:17),"who was and who is and who is to come" (cf. 4:8), "the Alpha and the Omega" (cf. 1:8), "thou Holy One" (cf. 16:5 and 15:4), "thou King of the ages" (cf. 15:3, the one "who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein" (cf. 10:6), and the one whom the martyrs could address as "O Master, the holy and true" (cf. 6:10). God's sovereignty is recognized by Christ, by the heavenly beings surrounding him, and by the redeemed of earth, whether martyrs, the righteous dead, or the faithful who are yet alive. The use of the genitive (θεοῦ) and also of the possessive pronoun gives emphasis to God's sovereignty--his rightful relation to his creation and to his activity in the natural order. God is one who acts and also the object toward or in relation to whom his creatures act.

The word "throne" is used at least forty-two times in the Book and in thirty-two of these including the eleven in which God is spoken of as the one sitting upon the throne (twice it is called the throne of God and of the Lamb) it is

used of the seat of or as a symbol of God's sole and absolute authority, the supreme headquarters of the forces of good. The prominence given the descriptives and titles ascribed to God as that given to the throne indicates that emphasis upon God's sovereignty which is a characteristic theme throughout the Book.

Yet God is not seen simply as an absolute and arbitrary monarch. Though he is creator and thus rightful ruler of the universe he also holds a unique place as the one who alone by virtue of his own nature is holy. The Father-Son relation between God and Christ is expressive of love and concern not only for one another but ultimately, in the work of Christ and in the goal of God's purpose, for all creation.

2. Jesus Christ. With God whom he calls "my Father" and "my God" Jesus Christ shares the name "Lord" and the worship by creatures both of heaven and earth to which an angel messenger has no right. (cf. 22:8,9). The title "Lord" in addition to such designations as "the first and the last," "the Alpha and Omega," "the Living one," and "the one who is and who was and who is to come," is often used so interchangeably of God and of Christ that it is difficult to distinguish to which the reference is meant. Perhaps the Apocalyptist is of the opinion that any of these may rightly be ascribed to either.

Of those names given to Jesus the most common and the

most widely distributed is that of "Lamb." This title in view of the intricate relation of The Revelation to the Old Testament at once points to the sacrificial and atoning mission of Christ. Twenty-eight times in half the chapters of The Revelation is he so designated. Nine times he is called simply "Jesus," twice, "Lord Jesus," in four instances "Christ" and in three, "Jesus Christ." Twice he is referred to as one like unto a son of man, once he is called the Son of God, and once The Word of God. He is also called the Amen, Faithful and True, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. He it is who is described as "the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." He is the one that "loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood," that "made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father," and that "cometh with the clouds." (1:5-7).

While those titles or descriptive designations referring to Jesus occur only about half as frequently as those to God it is to be noted that the use of pronouns directly point to Jesus as the more proximate to the scene of action. In the first three chapters Jesus speaks to the seven churches using the personal pronoun "I" at least fifty-five times. The proportion of instances in which the Greek genitive is used with reference to him is considerably less than those to God but in the the nominative and accusative somewhat more.

3. Spirit. In The Revelation there are seventeen references to the Spirit. Of these three are under the designation "the seven Spirits of God" and one, "the seven Spirits that are before his throne." The number "seven" as elsewhere in the Book apparently is used as a number denoting perfection. Of these seventeen occurrences ten are in the nominative case, one in the genitive, four, the dative, and two the accusative. Hence the Spirit is active, one who does things, and the one through whom the Apocalyptist is caught away to view the realities of eternity.

4. Those round about the throne. About the throne of God are heavenly beings chief of which are the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, and a vast company of angels. In the course of the Book the four living creatures are mentioned collectively thirteen times besides the seven instances in which one acts or is described apart from the others. The twenty-four elders are not distinguished individually but are mentioned collectively twelve times. They occupy twenty-four thrones round about the throne of God but cast their crowns before the throne of God. Like the redeemed on earth they are arrayed in white garments and like the four living creatures burst forth in spontaneous praise and worship in the presence of the majesty and activity of God. These twenty-four elders are generally thought of as being at least representative of the twelve patriarchs and of the twelve apostles or of the

Old Testament age and of the New Testament age and therefore representative of redeemed humanity. The living creatures are strikingly similar to those seen in the vision by Ezekiel and described in Ezekiel 1:5 ff. They are created beings and servants of God but further identification of them seems impossible.

The introduction of angels into the movement of the Book is interesting. At least sixty-six times the term "angel" occurs. Of these sixty-six, nine are in reference to "the seven angels" (not necessarily the same angels in each instance) who act in a series in executing God's judgment, two refer to the angels of Satan and one to the angel of the abyss who could well be an agent either of God or of Satan. The interpretation of the reference to the "angel" in connection with each of the seven churches is also debatable. "Michael" (cf. Jude 9) is the only name of an angel mentioned and he in turn is seen as leading an army of angels against Satan and his angels. The angel who reveals and interprets to John the message of The Revelation refuses to be worshipped by John claiming to be a fellow-servant with John and his brethren. He directs John to worship God. (21:8,9). These angels as the name "angel" indicates are messengers of God speaking forth or acting out the will of their master.

5. Those upon the earth. Upon the earth it is "the redeemed" who are the promoters of the cause of good. Perhaps

more than any other single term that of "saint" (fourteen times) is used of this group. They are also spoken of as faithful witnesses or martyrs, as those bearing the seal of God upon them, as those in white robes--they that came out of great tribulation who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, as those able to sing the song of redemption, those with the Lamb, called, chosen and true, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life--commonly termed simply the book of life, and those who overcome whether by resisting the more subtle attacks of evil or those more open threats.

The term "church" occurs twenty times, nineteen of which are in chapters one, two, and three. When it is used in the singular (seven instances) it refers to a single one of the seven churches to which the seven letters were to be sent and when in the plural with a single possible exception (22:16) to all seven of the churches mentioned. As suggested in the preceding chapter of this study the seven churches selected here are representative of the Church of Christ as a whole.

"Kingdom" is a term also significant in <u>The Revelation</u>. It is used nine times in six chapters of the Book. In 1:6 Ch Christ is said to have made the redeemed to be a kingdom, in 1:9 the kingdom is spoken of as being in Jesus and that for which John and his brethren in tribulation were suffering. In 5:10 like in 1:6 those who have been redeemed are spoken of as having been made a kingdom and priests unto God and as

reigning upon the earth. The kingdom of God is finally established when all evil is put down. With the expulsion of Satan from heaven a voice was heard in heaven proclaiming that the kingdom had come. (12:10). So the movement in chapters four through eleven points to the great climax reached in 11:15 when the proclamation is made that the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of God and of his Christ who reigns for ever and ever. Thus the kingdom begins as redemption is effected by Christ and constantly points ahead toward the time when all evil will be brought to absolute confinement.

The instruments used by God are many and varied but are always relevant to the accomplishment of his purpose. In chapters 21, 22 there is considered the goal in view of which his action is determined and toward which it is directed. Those things which are or which become submissive to his authority and which are necessary to the accomplishment of his purpose are his instruments. Thus even the lake of fire into which Satan and all his forces are finally thrown is an instrument of God necessary to protect the essential goodness of the new world order. The destruction which comes upon the earth through the ministry of the angels of God who proceed to act upon orders from the throne must be seen as essential to the accomplishment of his purpose and of his final goal set forth in the closing chapters of the Book. Into the new Jerusalem only the redeemed and the holy may come. The sin

which has separated man from God is removed and God dwells eternally with men.

On the side of evil.

1. Satan. In contrast to these personalities and agencies of good there is presented in The Revelation an organized and aggressive force of evil which stands opposed to good in all manifestations of its most basic moral disposition. At its head is that one who in The Revelation is most often called "the dragon" but who, in keeping with other Biblical books, is commonly known as Satan or the Devil. Of this one thirteen times the term "dragon" is used; eight times he is called "Satan"; five, "the Devil"; and four, "the serpent" or "the old serpent." He is also spoken of as "the accuser of the brethren before God," and "the deceiver of the whole world." Of the thirty-two instances noted where Satan is referred to under one or the other of the names above in twenty the name stands as subject of the sentence and hence in the nominative case, seven times in the genitive and five in the accusative. It is significant, however, that in the twenty instances noted above the passive voice is used in seven, indicating that the subject was being acted upon and that generally against its own will, whereas when the name of God was used as subject it was without exception in the active voice or used with predicate modifiers describing God's essential being. Though standing in complete contrast to God Satan also is made an object

of worship by those who wonder after the beast and so take sides with evil.

To determine with a reasonable certainty what significance these names have as used in The Revelation and as ascribed to this one--head of the forces of evil and under whose direction they operate--it is necessary to make a special investigation of their earlier usage. The term δράκων, οντος, ὁ translated "dragon," is probably derived from the root δέρκομαι, and refers to an animal described by Homer as of huge size, coiled like a snake, of blood-red or dark colour, shot with changeful hues, dwelling in mountains, feeding on poisonous herbs, In one instance Homer uses the term of an animal with three heads. Generally, however he uses δράκων and ὄφις indifferently for "serpent."[1] In the Septuagint it is used chiefly for the Hebrew תנין and generally means a dragon, a great serpent, or a fabulous animal.[2] The term is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Then there is the Greek form ὄφις, εως, ὁ which is also used quite freely by Classical writers from the time of Homer. Its primary meaning is that of a serpent or snake. In the Septuagint it is generally used for the Hebrew נחש which carries the same primary sense. Thayer states that with the

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1. Henry George Liddell, and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940. I. 448.
2. J. G. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. New York: American Book Co., 1889, page158.

ancients the serpent was an emblem of cunning and wisdom, and cites in support Genesis 3:1 ff. and II Corinthians 11:3. In this sense Christ calls crafty hypocrites "ὄφεις." (Matthew 23: 33). The serpent who deceived Eve was regarded by later Jews as the Devil and hence he is called "ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος."[1] The term is used nine times in the rest of the New Testament as compared with five in The Revelation.

Of the various names ascribed to this one "Satan" is the one perhaps least ambiguous. The Greek form is σατᾶν, ὁ or σατανᾶς, ὁ, and is a transliteration from the Hebrew שָׂטָן or the Aramaic שָׂטָן. The Hebrew שָׂטָן is the word for "adversary," or "opponent," or "accuser." (cf. I Kings 11:14, 23, Job 1: 6 ff.). In the Septuagint it is often rendered διάβολος or devil.[2] The sense of the Aramaic שָׂטָן meaning originally "one lying in ambush for" and hence as a proper name "the adversary" or "the accuser," is not lacking in the New Testament use of the term.[3] "Satan or "adversary" hence denotes one who opposes another in purpose or act. Thayer suggests that the appellation is given (1) to the prince of evil spirits, the inveterate adversary of God and of Christ who engages in such activity as inciting to apostacy from God and to sin, and circumventing men by strategems, and (2) to a Satan-like man.[4] In the New Testament the term is found twenty-six times and in The Revelation, eight. Of New Testament writers Paul alone uses the

1. Thayer, op. cit. "ὄφις" 470.
2. Liddell and Scott, op. cit. 1585.
3. James Hope Moulton, and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 570.
4. Thayer, op. cit. "σατᾶν" 571 f.

term "Satan" more often than the Apocalyptist.[1]

The name "Devil" is the substantive from the Greek διάβολος, ου, which in turn is from the root διά-βάλλω meaning "to throw across" or "to send over." In Classical usage the adjective meant "slanderous," "backbiting" and as a substantive "a slanderer." In the Septuagint it is used instead of Satan for the enemy, hence the Devil.[2] The New Testament carries forward these ideas and like ἰΔΨ, or ὁ σατανᾶς, is used to designate

> The prince of the demons, the author of evil, persecuting and afflicting them with diseases by means of demons who take possession of their bodies at his bidding; the malignant enemy of God and the Messiah.[3]

Figuratively the term is applied to a man who, by opposing the cause of God may be said to act the part of the devil or to take sides with him.[4] The term occurs thirty-one times in the rest of the New Testament as compared with five in The Revelation.

To summarize it might be noted that "dragon" carries with it the basic idea of "fierceness" and, along with "serpent," that of subtlety and cunningness. "Satan" has the basic meaning of "adversary" and "devil," of "slanderer," yet in the Biblical use as in The Revelation all four with the

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1. The term "Satan" is found in Matthew 3 times; in Mark, 5; Luke and Acts, 7; John (Gospel), 1; and in the Pauline Epistles, 10--almost without exception used as a proper name ascribed to this leader of evil.
2. Liddell and Scott, op. cit. "διάβολος" 390.
3. Thayer, op. cit. "διάβολος" 135.
4. loc. cit.

other descriptive designations as "the deceiver of the whole world" and "the accuser of our brethren" refer to the one who is the supreme leader of the forces of evil.

2. The beast. Next in importance among the forces of evil is that one who throughout the Book is termed the "beast," and for whom the author almost exclusively retains this symbolic and descriptive title. The Englich word "beast" is translated from the Greek θηρίον, ου, το, a term used thirty-eight times in The Revelation as compared with six elsewhere in the New Testament. Of these thirty-eight at least 26 refer to this cohort of Satan and for him no other name is given. The nine references to a beast who is allied with the great but corrupt city called "Babylon" are also perhaps to be taken as pointing to this same one and it is not impossible that the beast of 11:7 may also be so identified--though the latter seems to have less in common with the beast of 13:1 than does that one mentioned nine times in chapter 17. In 6:8 is a reference to wild beasts which is illustrative of the basic meaning of θηρίον as used elsewhere in the New Testament. In 13:11 the false prophet is described as a second beast. In the Septuagint θηρίον is used instead of the Hebrew חַיָּה and חַיָּה for an animal, wild animal, wild beast, or simply beast. In The Revelation 11:7 and chapters 12-20, says Thayer, under the figure of a beast is depicted Antichrist, both his person and his kingdom and power. Metaphorically especially among

Classical writers the term was used of a brutal, beastial man, savage and ferocious.[1]

Since the beast is so closely related to the dragon some interesting and significant contrasts and relations may well be noted. Though the name "dragon" is mentioned only thirteen times as compared with twenty-seven for the "beast," "dragon" is used as the subject in nine instances as compared with four for "beast" and "beast" occurs in the genitive relation in twelve instances as compared with one for "dragon." Among the various qualities and objects so related to the beast is "image" (3 times), "mark" (2 times), and authority, sight, name, number, throne, and mouth as compared with simply mouth of the dragon. Also the beast is spoken of as being the object of worship by their common followers six times as compared with once for the dragon. The beast thus is often made more prominent than Satan whom he serves.

The dragon is first seen as being in heaven, the beast as coming up out of the sea; the dragon as being red, while color seems insignificant in describing the beast except in chapter 17 (if that be the same beast) where he is scarlet-colored. Both are described as having seven heads and ten horns but the dragon as having seven diadems upon his heads and the the beast ten upon his horns and upon his heads names of blasphemy.

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1. Thayer, op. cit. "θηρίον" 290.

Hence while attention is drawn by the diadems to the head and thus to the sovereignty and strategy of the dragon it is directed to the horns and so to the strength of the beast. The beast is like a leopard (perhaps in subtlety and fierceness) but has feet like those of a bear and a mouth as the mouth of a lion (savage). From the dragon he receives his power, his throne, and his authority. Just as Christ is faithful in carrying out the will of his Father in whose name he acts so the beast is faithful in his relation to the dragon whose purpose he serves. Hence in all that he does the beast is at one in purpose with the dragon and acts in the kingdom of evil in full accord with the sovereignty of the dragon. The beast asserts himself as if he were God and his propaganda and blasphemy against God is of such a nature that all the inhabitants of the earth except those whose names are found written in the Lamb's book of life render to him worship of which, according to other parts of the Book, God alone is worthy. He has in himself no inhibitions conducive of promoting respect for God neither for those loyal to God whether in heaven or on earth. Yet restrictions are placed upon him from without and these he must respect. One of his heads was smitten unto death but the death-stroke was healed and he became even more aggressive than before. To him an image is erected and given life and men are compelled to worship this image. He is given a number, "666," in order that by this number he might

be identified. The further aspects of his character may per-- haps be examined more effectively in a comparison of him with the false prophet introduced as the second beast than with the dragon.

3. The false prophet. In 13:11 the Apocalyptist sees another beast-like character coming up out of the earth. When referred to by name this one, apart from his introduction, is consistently called "the false prophet." The term "false prophet" occurs three times in The Revelation, three in Mat-- thew, and once each in five other New Testament books. Ety- mologically the meaning is obviously "one who falsely speaks forth." In each case except Acts 13:6 the term is used in the plural. Jesus predicts that false prophets shall arise and lead many astray. (cf. Matthew 24:11, Mark 13:22). He further describes them as presenting themselves in sheep's clothing but inwardly being ravening wolves (cf. Matthew 7:15), as having been spoken well of by their fellowmen, and along with false christs showing great signs and wonders so as to lead astray if possible even the elect. (cf. Matthew 24:24). In the later Epistles false prophets had already been trou- bling the churches and seeking to pervert their progress by introducing dangerous doctrines. In Acts 13:6, the only instance in the New Testament where the singular number is used, Bar-Jesus the sorcerer who is trying to turn another away from Paul's message is said to be a false prophet.

Paul proceeds to describe him in the following verses as full of all guile and all villany, as son of the devil, enemy of all unrighteousness and a perverter of the right ways of the Lord.

The character of the false prophet of The Revelation differs from that of those mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament most significantly in that he stands in a unique relation to the beast and to the dragon and exercises all the authority of the beast who in turn has received his throne and authority directly from the dragon.

As compared with the beast the false prophet comes up out of the earth instead of from the sea. He has two horns like a lamb as compared with the ten of the beast and the dragon and hence appears relatively harmless. He speaks with the subtlety and fierceness of the dragon, however, and with the same authority as the beast. He is able to do spectacu--lar signs by which he deceives the people. Through his in--fluence and suggestion the people of the earth make an image to the beast. The power given him is great enough to give life to the image that the image should both speak and cause to be killed those who do not worship it. The false prophet generally is the one who protects and advances the interests of the beast even more than those of himself. He acts in harmony with their common relation to the dragon. Besides an image the beast is given a certain mark indicative of his

name or of the number of his name which the false prophet in--sists on having stamped upon all those who dwell upon the earth. Hence the office of the false prophet is not that of exalting himself so much as to declare the claims of the beast, to support his dignity, and to execute his wishes. Out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet alike, there come forth unclean spirits which are spirits of demons to advance their common cause (16:13,14), and eventual--ly all three suffer the same defeat and final destiny as do all those who are deceived by them.

4. The seat of evil and relevant expressions considered. As suggested, the seat of operation out from which evil works shifts according to the progress which its agents are able to make or according to the defeats they suffer. Satan is said to have been driven from heaven with his angels to the earth and from then until his final defeat he and his forces are at least seeking to establish their seat of authority upon the earth.

In connection with these efforts several expressions which may seem to be relevant to a consideration of the seat of evil will be noted as they relate to Satan. First the "synagogue of Satan" is mentioned twice. (2:9, 3:9). Per--haps "synagogue" is to be understood in terms of its root meaning--"an assembly," or a "coming together." Those who lie or at--tempt to deceive are in both cases said to be a "synagogue

of Satan." By resorting to deceitfulness to gain special privilege they show themselves to be allied with Satan the "deceiver of the whole world." (cf. John 8:44). Hence a class of people is perhaps suggested rather than the seat of evil except insofar as Satan keeps company with those who follow his example.

Then in relation to Satan as to God though less frequently there is mentioned both a throne and a kingdom. In 2:13 the church in Pergamum which had compromised to extend fellowship to those who were actively attempting to undermine its purity and faith in God, is said to be dwelling where Satan's throne is. Whether this church is so related to Satan because of its tolerance and hence encouragement of his activity or because of the political affiliation of the city is an open question. As suggested Pergamos had been the original capital of the Roman Government in Asia.[1] Since the Roman Government was so closely associated with Satan as his agent in persecuting the Christians it appears that the name "Satan" in both instances in 2:13 could be used metaphorically. At any rate these Christians were exposed in an unusual way to the realm of Satan's activity and apparent sovereignty. In 13:2 another reference is made to Satan's throne when he, the dragon, gives to the beast his throne. Henceforth the beast acts in the authority of the dragon. In the series of judg--

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1. See 58 f. of this work.

ments poured out upon the earth by the angels of God the fifth bowl is emptied forth upon the throne of the beast. As a result his kingdom is darkened and they undergo great pain; but, instead of repenting, blaspheme God all the more. In 11:15 the kingdom of the world is said to have become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ. In 17:12,13,17, the kings of the earth receive kingdoms with the beast for a short time and unanimously give their authority to the beast and join him in war against the Lamb who is by nature and God's purpose king of kings and lord of lords.

It is interesting and perhaps significant to note that while Satan himself is cast down his chief agents are generally thought of as "coming up" or of appearing from underneath and that he is ultimately, with all his forces who with him have advanced to a leading position on the earth, destined to the region thought of as being below and hence farthest from God and from the throne of absolute authority.

5. Peculiar active agents of Satan. Among those who are presented as active agents in accomplishing the purposes of Satan, besides the beast and false prophet, special attention should be given first to identify or to distinguish those mentioned as angels of Satan, demons, and unclean spirits. These are subservient to the designs of Satan and also to those of Satan's primary agents--the beast and the false prophet. The term "angel" is used of certain of Satan's

servants as well as of those of God. In chapter twelve Satan with his angels are pictured as warring against the angels of God in heaven as as both (Satan and his angels) being cast down to the earth. (12:7-9). There are three references to demons and three to unclean spirits in the Book. While the relation between Satan's angels, demons, and unclean spirits is undoubtedly close the data presented in The Revelation appears to be insufficient to determine with certainty whether or not they all refer to the same class of beings holding the same relation to Satan. In 9:20 demons along with idols are worshipped by the wicked and unrepentant men, in 16:13,14 the unclean spirits coming forth from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and false prophet are said to be spirits of demons, and in 18:2 there appears to be an example of Hebrew parallelism manifest in the statement "Babylon . . . is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit," in which case the two could be considered as practically identical. The Greek word δαιμόνιον, ου, το, was used by Classical authors of a spirit or a being inferior to God and superior to men in both a good sense and a bad but generally of evil spirits or the messengers and ministers of the devil.[1] Hence the root meaning would suggest that the terms demon, unclean spirit, and angel[2] of Satan could and probably do refer to the same class of Satan's servants.

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1. Thayer, op. cit. "δαιμόνιον" 123 f.
2. According to Thayer, op. cit. "ἄγγελος" p. 5 the basic sense of the word is that of messenger, envoy, one who is sent.

In 9:11 is mentioned the angel of the abyss who is king of the locusts that come up from the abyss. His name is in Hebrew "Abaddon" and in Greek "Apollyon" derived from the Hebrew root אבד--to perish, and the Greek ἀπολλύω--to destroy. Of Abaddon, Thayer suggests that as a proper name it is given to the angel-prince of the infernal regions, the minister of death and author of havoc on earth.[1] It would seem probable that this destroyer angel-king was the same one that is pic--tured as the star fallen from heaven to earth to whom was given the key to the pit of the abyss. A heavenly being, messenger, or light is often personified by the author under the name of a star. (cf. 1:16, 20; 8:10; 22:16). In 8:10,11, a great star burning as a torch is seen as falling from heaven to earth. This star brings bitterness and death and is called by a name "Wormwood"--Ἄψινθος a term which does not occur else--where in the New Testament, but which also is personified as a destructive agent.

As to the relation of these personified forces and agents to Satan there is much uncertainty. The name "destroyer" and the falling from heaven to the earth are in perfect accord with what is suggested of Satan's history and activity in chapter twelve. If Satan is simply the most prominent among the fallen angels of whom he was leader as Michael perhaps was of the angels of God whom he led, Satan himself might well

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1. Thayer, op. cit. "Ἀβαδδών" p. 1.

be the star fallen from heaven to whom was given the key to the abyss and the angel of the abyss who was king of the destructive agents that came up therefrom. Such a view would harmonize with the idea found so often that the forces of Satan came up from beneath (cf. 11:7; 13:1,11; 17:8), while Satan himself appears to have been cast down to the earth. (12:8-12). The relation of the beast "that cometh up out of the abyss" in 11:7 still remains a problem. It is he who makes war against and kills the two witnesses in chapter 11. Probably this beast, along with that one of chapter 17 is to be identified with the one of 13:1 but whether so or not both are closely allied with Satan under whose authority they work.

6. Other instruments of Satan. Since the chief scene of Satan's missionary enterprise is seen as occurring among the peoples of the earth special attention must be given to the instruments he employs in his activities and to the nature of those who among the inhabitants of the earth become loyal adherents to his purposes. The nature of those persons on earth who become Satan's followers is reserved for treatment in the section which follows. Here attention will be given in treating those instruments used by Satan and his allies which become evil because of their association with him or because of their resulting from his previous activity.

(a) Babylon. The wicked city bearing the name

"MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH," is a place nearly as well known as representative of evil as is Satan himself. (17:5). Under somewhat veiled nomenclature the author was best able to speak of the city of Rome, the great capital of wickedness and arch-enemy of Christianity such as Babylon had been to Judaism. After a careful study of the contemporary situation into which The Revelation came scholars have little difficulty in reaching a point of agreement as to the allegorical use of the name "Babylon" for that of "Rome."

This wicked city is called not only the great harlot but also "the mother of the harlots." In Hebrew thought in addition to its literal sense which would also imply yielding oneself to defilement for the sake of gain, the term "harlot" was used allegorically of an idolatress, and hence Rome as the chief seat of idolatry would be rightfully described under the figure.[1] Israel is thought of as playing the harlot when she forsakes the true God, her rightful husband, and his pure worship to follow idols who are false gods. Even the city of Jerusalem is so described by the Prophets. (cf. Hosea 4:11-14; Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1,6,8). So Rome has not only defiled herself but is the chief seat from which her own sin is being propagated. The kings and the merchants of the earth and also the shipbuilders ally themselves with her, partake

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1. Thayer, op. cit. "πόρνη" 532.

of her sin, and share in helping to spread her influence throughout the whole earth.

When the Apocalyptist sees the wicked city she is being carried forth by a scarlet-colored beast who, like and perhaps identical with the beast of 13:1, has seven heads and ten horns and is described, in contrast to having upon his heads names of blasphemy, as being full of names of blasphemy. The woman herself is arrayed in purple and scarlet and decked with gold, and precious stone, and pearls; she is decked in royal apparel but has sold her virtue to the forces of evil. Not only has she sold out to evil herself but she has also been the means of corrupting others. Those who because of their faith in Jesus refuse to submit to and participate in her sin did so at the expense of their very life blood. Her attraction was irresistable to those whose names were not written in the book of life. To the kings and the merchants of the earth she is the great political and commercial center of the whole earth. In allying themselves with her, however, they approve of her sins and must suffer in the punishment accordingly. In pronouncing judgment upon her God causes it to be that the beast with whom she is allied and the ten kings, who are represented by the ten horns of the beast but apparently over whom the woman rules, come to hate the woman and to destroy her.

"This Babylon is Rome for the suffering saints," says

Gettys, "but for the ages Babylon is the seat of the authority of Satan, and her rulers are the agents of Satan who substitute themselves for the eternal God."[1] The apparent deliberate contrast between the wicked city described in chapters 17, 18 and the holy city in 21, 22, throws further light on the significance of this seat of wickedness in the scheme of Satan. In each case it is one of the seven angels who had acted as an agent of God in pouring out the bowls of his wrath who comes to speak to John, who requests "come hither," and who carries him away in the Spirit into a wilderness to show him the great harlot (17:1,3) and to a great and high mountain to show him the bride, the wife of the Lamb, the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. In these cities two pictures are set forth--one of a city given over to the ways of evil--being carried by the beast--and the other where the influence of God and of the Lamb is supreme. One is illustrative of the Goal toward which evil works, the other, the object of God's purpose for man.

(b) false doctrines. By means of false doctrines Satan finds another opportunity to propagate his antagonism to God and to attack the servants of God. Those dangerous doctrines of which the Nicolaitan heresy appears as the most outstanding were ready-made instruments through which Satan

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1. Joseph M. Gettys, How to Study The Revelation. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press. 90.

was seeking to undermine the life of the churches. The church in Ephesus is commended for withstanding this false doctrine and the practises to which it led, while the church in Pergamum is condemned (2:6) because it has among its number some who hold to such teaching. No further direct Biblical reference is made to this group yet as was noted in chapter one of this study[1] and from the suggestion given in 2:14 this group was a party encouraging as did Balaam undue liberty and license and hence encouraging compromise with certain aspects of paganism. Perhaps the teaching of Balaam was much like that of the Nicolaitans. With reference to 2:14 William Baur suggests that

> Balaam is the type of the teacher of the church who attempts to advance the cause of God by advocating an unholy alliance with the ungodly and worldly, and so conforming the life of the church to the spirit of the flesh.[2]

In 2:20 a similar group under the leadership of one "Jezebel" who was guilty, as the two groups above, of encouraging licentious and careless living, of which the outstanding sins were the encouraging of eating things offered to idols and fornication, threatens the church at Thyatira.

(c) other instruments. Among other instruments used by the forces of Satan are the image of the beast, the mark

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1. See page 62 f.
2. William Baur, "Balaam," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, I, 378 f.

or seal of the beast, and the delusive propaganda of the false prophet. These are closely related to the purpose of Satan in directing men away from God and to himself in order that they might recognize his own aggressive kingly claims.

Among those instruments of Satan which have resulted from his previous activity "Death" and "Hades" as personified in The Revelation may be cited. The word "death" is used at least nineteen times in the Book, "dead" about the same number, and "Hades" in four instances. Since special reference is made to the serpent of Genesis 3, it is not unusual to find the promised end-result of the serpent's activity (cf. Gen. 3:1-4) playing a prominent part in the final judgment of God upon sin. After having conquered the bonds of death Christ declares "I have the keys of death and of Hades." (1:18). In 6:8 Death and Hades appear to be operating ultimately not only under the control of God but also in executing his purpose and preparing the way for his final goal. In 20:13 death and Hades give up their dead for judgment before God and in 20:14 they were both cast into the lake of fire. In 21:4 when God is in supreme control and evil is banished "death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more; the first things are passed away."

Hades as the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל denotes the place of the dead.[1]

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1. Davis, J. D., "Hell," Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, 235.

In New Testament thought the abyss is to be identified with "Hades, the place of the dead (Rom. 10:7); in particular, the dwelling of evil spirits, presided over by Apollyon, that is Satan."[1] If Hades or the abyss as here suggested is presided over actually by Satan (cf. Luke 8:31 and Rev. 9:11) and eventually is along with "Death" to be cast into the lake of fire it must be also instrumental in Satan's purpose.

7. Human agents and servants of evil. In contrast to those instruments which in themselves are devoid of moral quality are those persons on earth who while endowed with moral status choose to yield themselves as servants to the designs of Satan. According to The Revelation all of these might well be said to have been deceived by the enticive yet often threatening activity of evil, and to have merited their title "the wicked" because of their relation to Satan. When the evil forces are at their peak of power and influence every one whose name is not written in the book of life of the Lamb worships the beast. In 19:20 those who submit to bear the mark of the beast and to worship him are said to have been deceived by the false prophet. All whose names were not found written in the book of life were considered to fall into this group of the wicked (cf. 13:8) and were to be cast into the lake of fire. (cf. 20:15). Only they whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life may enter into the

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1. Davis, "Abyss," Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, 8.

new Jerusalem. Hence for one not to have his name written in the book of life automatically indicates that he has allied himself with the wicked agents of Satan.

Just as the righteous possessed certain distinguishing marks so the wicked are characterized by certain outstanding and dominating features. Of these one of the most outstanding is that desire to deceive others in a way comparable to that by which they themselves have been deceived. This is often done by means which tend to draw undue attention to themselves. In 2:2 the church at Ephesus is praised for its discernment in ridding from its number evil men who pretended to be apostles when actually they were not. In the American Standard Version the word "evil" occurs but this one time. The Greek term "κακός," however, is also found in 16:2 and is there translated "noisome." Thayer suggests that the basic meaning of κακός is "bad" and that it is used (1) of a bad nature--not such as it ought to be, (2) of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting; base, wrong, wicked, (3) troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful, destressive. According to the second of these Thayer interprets the substantive "κακούς" in 2:2 and according to the third, "κακόν" in 6:2.[1] The synonym "πονηρός" apparently occurs but once in The Revelation and then as a modifier parallel to "κακός." It, like κακός, may be

1. Thayer, op. cit. "κακός," 320.

used to denote "bad, bad nature or bad condition" both in a physical and in an ethical sense.[1]

In 2;9 and 3:9 another group is mentioned as being peculiarly related to Satan because they like those in 2;2,3, were guilty of attempting to pretend that they were entitled to privileges that were rightfully not theirs, This group was guilty of lying (3:9) and also of blasphemy. (2:9). Still others of the same sort are those in the church at Sardis who are living upon a past reputation. This group too, in trying to appear to be more or other than they really are; and hence, as does Satan, to deceive others, are in reality only deceiving themselves and are commanded to repent. Some have not gone so far as these, however, but have nevertheless unconsciously drifted from their original love and zeal. They are described as having fallen and as standing in need of being restored because they had left their first love (2:4) and were becoming lukewarm in their devotion to Christ. Though they did not realize their true condition they were none-the-less deceived and unless they would awake to their true need and repent they would be cast out with the wicked.

Later references to the wicked generally refer to the execution of judgment and to the punishment which they must bear. At the opening of the sixth seal in 6:15,16, all those

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1. Thayer, op. cit. "πονηρὸς," 530.

who dwell upon the face of the earth but especially those in high places of authority are unable to stand before the wrath of God. It is implied that these were wicked men whose guilt was naturally intensified in the presence of God. They are contrasted with the righteous martyrs who at the opening of the fifth seal cry out for an execution of justice and with those in 7:13-17 who having washed their robes ~~and made~~ them white and who having come out of the great tribulation stand before the throne in full confidence, with God's full protection, and with his comfort and provision for all their needs. In 9:4 those who bear not the seal of God on their foreheads are subject to such torments that they will seek death but not find it. In 9:20,21, when the sixth seal was opened, the four angels loosed and the third part of men killed, the rest of mankind repented not of their great sinfulness but continue to worship demons and the idols which they themselves had made. The wicked are presented here as unrepentant, idolators, murderers, sorcerers, fornicators, and thieves, and in 21:8 the fearful, the unbelieving, abominable and all liars are included among those who ultimately have their part in the lake of fire.

According to 13:8 all whose names are not written in the book of life worship the beast and in chapter 14, the angel of God proclaims:

> If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also

> shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. (14:9b-11).

The wicked of earth are looked upon as the vintage of the earth which is cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God out of which there comes blood even unto the bridles of the horses. When the bowls of God's wrath are poured forth upon the earth further punishment is meted out to the wicked. At the emptying of the first bowl noisome and grievous sores come on the men that had received the mark of the beast and at the fifth, upon the throne of the beast, those close allies with Satan in his kingdom gnawed their tongues and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but refused to repent.

Dramatic Development of the Conflict

The Revelation is a book of active conflict. The prominence given to such verbs of action as slay, overcometh, repent, kill, and to nouns no less suggestive--woe, war, wrath, day of wrath, martyr, mystery, thunder, fire, smoke, sword, and blood--points to the conflict as central in the thought of the Book. The position of the Apocalyptist is that of one who sees and hears and who acts as the human instrument or medium through whom the angel of Christ may interpret the significance of the events witnessed. At

least fifty times John uses the expression "I saw" and more than half that number "I heard." By expressions such as these and by the very nature of the things seen and heard the author suggests units of continuous action, breaks between these units, and specific scenes or groups of closely related scenes within these longer units. In chapter one of this study the dramatic character of The Revelation was noted, and an arrangement into acts and scenes was suggested.[1] Each "act" was made to embody one or more segments and each scene, one or more paragraphs.[2] The action described in the Book and the underlying strategy and tactics may best be treated by tracing the dramatic development of the conflict through these chief units of action and the scenes into which they are subdivided.

The purpose of this section is that of relating the nature of the conflicting forces to the development of the conflict. The development and especially the strategy and tactics employed will be seen to depend largely upon the underlying motive of the actors and upon the end-result toward which each course of action is directed. The plot was said to center around the defeat of evil and the establishment of the kingdom of God. The Apocalyptist describes, interprets, and even takes part in the action as one loyal to the side of good but the nature of the conflict is determined primarily

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1. See 74-81.
2. See 11-18.

by these super-human forces described in the preceding pages. The activity of Satan stands in direct contrast to the purpose of God.

In this section the conflict will be developed in terms of the underlying dramatic character of the Book. The general procedure to be followed is that of treating first the dramatic development in each unit as given in that particular unit and secondly if such appears necessary to state briefly the significance of the unit under consideration to the conflict. The first act will cover chapters one through three dealing chiefly with Christ and the seven churches and the invasion of these churches by Satan; the second, chapters four through eleven and will deal primarily with the throne in heaven and potential judgment; the third, chapters twelve through fourteen, will concern the battle itself with evil at the peak of its activity; the fourth, chapters fifteen through twenty, centers about the destiny of evil and the victory of good; and the fifth, the last two chapters of the Book are concerned with the eternal blessedness which follows. With this preview it is apparent at once that the action is purposive leading to a definite goal inherent within the purpose of the victorious power.

Act I. In Act I the setting is the isle of Patmos where the Apocalyptist, John, is an exile. John plays a leading part in introducing the action, but when this is done Christ

very naturally becomes the leading character and the churches the leading object of his concern.

Scene 1. The first scene (1:1-8) is clearly introductory. In verses 1-3 the message is under consideration. Successively the origin, the transmission, the nature and the relevance or urgency are stated and the divine character of each emphasized. John greets the seven churches of Asia as one familiar to them and proceeds in his greeting to introduce to them in the same verse the eternal One--God, the Spirit, and, in the next three verses, Jesus Christ. Then in verse 8 he turns back to emphasize the character of God by which the way is prepared for the conflict and, on the basis of the character of Christ and of God, for the solution of the conflict later to be realized. In these opening verses not only has the message and the leading characters on the side of good--God, the Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the angel in heaven or mediating between--and John and the churches on earth--but the aspects of both the message and of the chief characters which especially stand out as relevant to the conflict ahead are already given special attention. Three of the eight verses are given to presenting Christ and to emphasizing those aspects of his person and work which would bring strength and courage to those who look to him as their leader in the actual conflict. His kingly and priestly qualities assure victory in the future as in the past. But the message is directed toward the

future rather than the past and Christ too is the one who is coming. God is the Omega as well as the Alpha and the one who is to come as well as the one who is and who was. God is also the Almighty against whom none can prevail. Satan is not mentioned in this opening scene but that his work is assumed is certain already from the outstanding features of the message and of those to enter the conflict on the side of good.

Scene 2. The second scene (1:9-20) centers in John's vision of the glorified Christ in the midst of the churches. John is in exile and undergoing persecution perhaps almost unbearable.[1] This message is first of all one for John himself and secondly one to the seven churches with whom John was a brother and partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus. This message is one of encouragement in that it portrays a supreme example of victory and indicates that John and these persecuted or discouraged Christians as well as their Lord could be victorious over the active threats of evil. By these acts against John and the Church the powers of evil had staged an invasion of the churches and had snatched their leader from them. These agents of evil could not prohibit John's communion with Christ nor Christ's revelation to him and ultimately to the churches, however, and hence after evil had done its work this message came with words of comfort and encouragement. For the message

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1. See 52-55.

of the entire Book the character of Christ as seen in this vision sets the keynote.

While in the Spirit on the Lord's day John is directed by a great voice to this vision of the glorified Christ. (cf. with the vision of Daniel 10:5-6) Christ is revealed as one like unto a son of man in the midst of the churches, All of his majesty and purity and sovereignty, his priestly character, judgment, quick penetrating insight, strength, and power radiate from his very appearance. His presence calls forth the utmost respect, yet his touch dispels all fear. He had overcome once and for all and having overcome the most severe attack evil could wage stood in a position as one holding the keys to the age-old enemies of death and Hades to minister to the needs of others.

At this stage, however, the presentation of the real conflict is hardly begun. The powers of evil have not been revealed except as a strong resisting force to the will of God is implied. That a battle is in the offing is evident from this brief character sketch of the one who is to be the victor. His eyes were piercing, his voice commanding, and his very countenance was one of strength. This scene carries with it an element of dramatic preparation and suspense and presupposes both the character of an opposing force and a need in the churches to which the message is directed. In contrast to the precision of Christ's scrutiny stands the

subtlety of Satan and against the power of Christ, the claims of Satan.

Scene 3. The third and closing scene of Act I carries the message of Christ forward to the churches. Christ is still as in the vision seen as in the midst of and above the churches. John is mediator between Christ and the churches. Christ is principal even in scene three where most of the attention is given to a consideration of the condition within each of the churches. In each of the seven brief Epistles Christ is introduced by the author with some of the descriptives from the vision specially relevant to the needs of that church.[1] Though the conflict has already begun the antagonist is introduced very indirectly. As shall be noted the attack is made openly and from without in some cases and more subtley and from within in others. Evil is seen to have quite secretly invaded at least five of the seven churches and stands as a recognized foe of Christ and of his purpose. Against each church the advance of evil is of a different nature dependent upon the condition of the church itself; hence the activity of evil with its strategy and tactics in each case must be noted separately.

Those constituting the church at Ephesus along some lines were very zealous but at other points they had compromised. They are directed to Christ who "walketh" in the midst of the

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1. See page 15 for further details of the arrangement of letters.

seven churches. (2:1). Very carefully and with keen discernment they guarded their orthodoxy; but in concentrating upon this point of defence rather than with eyes fixed upon Christ carrying on an aggressive missionary program, they had lost their first love both for Christ and for their fellowmen. Hence they had fallen back into a condition becoming progressively more stagnant. Evil had waged a double attack upon these Christians. False men had come in with false doctrines but with careful scrutiny these representatives had been detected and cast out. The flank attack made by Satan upon them left them so weak that when placed beside Christ for judgment these Christians at Ephesus were found wanting in the love with which they had been endowed. While attention was focused on one point at another Satan had made his invasion. The goal toward which they had set out was still promised to those who overcame. That which they were to overcome is not stated directly but to overcome seems to imply to resist successfully the appeals of Satan which would thwart utter loyalty to Christ.

The second of the seven churches, that of Smyrna, had also been attacked by Satan. Its members faced severe persecution and even death; yet Christ's message to them is one of victory and of life. Satan was bringing great tribulation, suffering, and poverty upon them and was about to renew and to intensify his efforts. But the period of their tribulation

would be limited and if they were faithful Christ promised to them a crown of life. In 21:14 the lake of fire is spoken of as the second death. Those who overcome by their faithfulness to Christ shall not be hurt of this second death. But those who choose the joy of this life rather than faithfulness to Christ are the real victims of death.

Instead of the subtle approach against the Ephesian church Satan's strategy here was that of using force and attempting to compel by means of giving or taking away the things of this world or of this life. But death is his limit and his activity can not go beyond. Hence his chief activity is that of persecuting all who are loyal to the cause of God. His strategy, however, was effective only as those on whom it was used were attached or devoted to the things of this world and to themselves. Thus the church at Smyrna is a scene where the conflicting forces have met in open battle; not Satan against God but Satan attempting to invade the realm of God's rightful dominion, the Church. This conflict calls for decision. Complete loyalty to one side or the other is necessary. The conflict brings with it suffering upon those on earth who are involved in the direct conflict.

To the third of these churches, that in Pergamum, Christ is presented as the one that hath the sharp two-edged sword. While these Christians had proved faithful in the face of great persecution and even martyrdom, they were manifesting a

basic weakness by which Satan was making his inroads at another point. This church had been confronted with the teaching of Balaam and with the teaching of the Nicolaitans and had allowed some of those in its own number to hold such false delusive doctrine and so to encourage the practices supported by this teaching. While resisting Satan's outer attack and his direct blows the church at Pergamum fell short in not discerning and casting from its midst those doing the work of Satan.

Satan is seen as dependent upon his agents for carrying out his activity at Pergamum. He had begun by a bold attack upon the witnesses of Christ but the more subtle approach of attempting to lead this church from Christ by introducing false teaching and practices of a licentious nature proves more successful. As opposed to Satan's attack upon the followers of Christ, Christ promised to make war against these agents of Satan's delusive doctrines who have so allied themselves with Satan's designs as to be encouraging apostacy. All those who had compromised with the purpose of Satan must repent and change their course of action or he will make war against them with the sword of his mouth. The implication is that ultimately war is inevitable where Christ is not supreme.

The church at Thyatira is viewed by Christ before the scrutiny and judgment of whose eyes they cannot escape. Satan's attack here is of much the same nature but perhaps even more vigorous than was that upon the church at

Pergamum. At Thyatira a woman known as Jezebel is claiming divine authority in her teaching by which she is seducing those loyal to Christ into sinful practices. Both the claims and the work of this deceiving prophetess are false and hence in harmony with the character of Satan. Christ was merciful in giving her time to repent but she chose to identify her-- self with the ways of Satan rather than those of God.

Here again Satan is seen to have taken the initiative in seeking to destroy or to defile that upon which God has the rightful prerogative. This great seducer and all those who have been seduced by her except they repent must undergo great tribulation in which they will become an example of the severi-- ty of God's judgment upon all aspects or propagators of evil. Christ meets directly those loyal to Satan. Except they repent and the case against them is cleared conflict is certain.

The fifth of the seven churches, that at Sardis, is said to be "dead." This condition appears to be merely a more advanced stage of the state towards which the church at Ephesus was moving. The death was a spiritual one separating the church from God and from life in him. It is through the Spirit of God that they must be enlivened and Christ is the one who holds the "seven Spirits of God." They had lost their zeal and hence had not perfected their works. They had defiled their garments and so had identified themselves with Satan and his activity. In contrast are the pure who stand

on the side of God in white garments. Those who had been led astray are exhorted to return to the original source of their life and to be watchful. Hence Satan's object was that of bring spiritual death and defilement, that of Christ is, purity and life.

The church at Philadelphia like that at Smyrna is left uncondemned. Christ is introduced to these followers of his as the one holy and true with absolute authority, the one who is presenting to them an open door of opportunity. Because they had been faithful Christ promises to show his love for them by causing even those who are of the synagogue of Satan to worship before them rather than they before the forces of Satan.

The conflict is spoken of as the "hour of trial" "which is to come upon the whole earth to try those who dwell upon the earth. Hence the main aspects of the conflict lie ahead and apparently will take place upon the earth. Those who are faithful and so overcome the attacks of Satan, however, will be protected from this hour of great trial. They are to serve in an important capacity in the new order and are to be permanently identified with the purpose and presence of God.

Those in the church at Laodicea have not been fully aware of the conflicting claims made upon them. They have placed themselves as a medium between two contradictory spheres of influence. The magnetic attraction of the one

has tended to counteract that of the other and the consequent state is described as "lukewarm." They are with a divided loyalty not in complete harmony with either side. Gradually the Laodicean church had drifted toward Satan's sphere of activity and had allowed its zeal to become cooled. Its members had become satisfied with the riches of this world and in so doing had lost their consciousness of the importance of spiritual values. Hence while they were accumulating earthly riches they were being spiritually impoverished.

With these facts a new insight into the character of Satan's activity may be gained. His purpose as the enemy of the church and of Christ was to cause those who had had a supreme loyalty to Christ to give at least their major attention to things of minor worth. These were going in the direction of Satan and unless they became zealous and repented of their compromising, this-worldly disposition Christ must shamefully cast them from him.

But Christ on the other hand loves them and before he casts them from him is going to reprove and chasten them in order that they might be protected from greater attachment to and attacks from evil. All who are attentive to hear the voice of Christ are invited to come to him and to have communion with him. To the one who overcomes he promises to give a place with him in his kingdom. Christ himself has set the example by overcoming and asks his followers to do the same.

Hence in Act I Christ stands out as central. His most important relation receiving major emphasis in this Act is that to his Church. He himself has suffered from the activity of Satan and from its results to the extent of having sacrificed his own life that men might be loosed from their sins through his blood. He has set an example for his followers by overcoming all of Satan's activity and its most dreaded result--death, and as victor over death has shown himself to have met man at the point of his greatest need. Now he stands in relation to the Church as its glorified head, an example of complete victory triumphing over death the extremity of Satan's activity. He is leading the way for all who like him would be overcomers.

The churches, however, had been attacked and in some cases invaded by the influence of Satan's activity. They are confronted with his designs and because of a compromising attitude some of them stand in great danger of having their relation to Christ severed. Christ is seen as ultimately sovereign but the invasion by Satan of the churches indicates that conflict lies ahead. If Christ is to be supreme and peace eternal conflict with Satan is inevitable. The two key words of scene 3 are "repent" to those who have not stood firm in resisting Satan's activity and "overcome" to those who exposed to Satan's attacks--whether from without or within--are in constant danger of becoming discouraged. Throughout this act there are elements of mystery, suspense, and urgency to arouse attention;

notes of preparation pointing to great conflict ahead; and suggestions of the most vital relevance to the needs of men not only in that day but to those of all time.

Act II. Of the five units of action suggested Act II is the longest. Chapters four through eleven, which describe its action, have been subdivided into eight specific scenes each of which bears a significant relation to the development of the conflict. Generally this entire unit points ahead. It represents action as incomplete especially through its use of mystery and suspense and the frequent use of the expression "one-third part."

In scene 1 (chapter 4) the throne of God stands out as most significant; in scene 2 (chapter 5), the sealed book; in scene 3 (chapter 6), the six seals; in scene 4 (chapter 7), the redeemed; in scene 5 (chapters 8 and 9), the seventh seal and the six trumpets; in scene 6 chapter 10), the strong angel and the book which is eaten; in scene 7 (chapter 11 verses 1-14), the two witnesses; and in scene 8 (the remaining verses of chapter 11), the seventh trumpet and with it the proclamation of the triumph of the kingdom of Christ. Each of these divisions within this second unit of action will be related individually to the development of the conflict, however, just as was done in Act I.

The most significant single word of chapters 4 through 11 is "throne"—the symbol of authority and dominion. The throne

is central and significant because of the character of that One who occupies it. All action is being made subordinate to the will of the One sitting upon the throne and all the leading characters act in harmony. The Lamb introduced in chapter 5 shares the glory and honor of the One sitting upon the throne and carries out the will of that One.

In Act I Satan was seen not only as having invaded the world in general but also attempting and in some measure as succeeding in an invasion of the churches of Christ. There was already some degree of conflict inasmuchas Satan's efforts rere resisted, but greater conflict is foreseen and promised by Christ. In Act II this conflict is seen as in progress. The scene shifts from earth to heaven and the realities of heaven and its judgments appear before the eyes of the Apocalyptist.

Scene 1. In Act II like in Act I the opening scene is one the purpose of which is to prepare for future conflict. The phrase "After these things" indicates a definite break in the thread of thought and the circumstances of chapters 1 through 3 and chapter 4. John sees a door opened in heaven and hears a voice as of a trumpet speaking with him and directing him, "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter." (4:1). The glory of the throne and of its immediate envivonment leads even one's imagination beyond itself. Here John can best speak for

himself.

> Straightway I was in the Spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. . . . And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. (4:2-6).

Not only is this scene made real to the Apocalyptist through the sense of sight but also that which he hears adds greatly to the impression it makes. First he hears voices and thunders proceeding out from the throne. Then he hears the four living creatures proclaiming day and night,

> Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. (4:8b).

Then the twenty-four elders join in the worship of God casting their crowns before the throne saying,

> Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created. (4:11).

Thus in scene 1 the standard of absolute and universal authority is described. Evil is not mentioned but rather attention is directed to God and to his glory. The heavenly creatures sing forth with joyful rhythm praises to the one who is holy, who is Almighty, who is eternal, and who is worthy of all because he is creator of all. Hence a standard

is revealed according to which all evil is to be judged. Both the conflict and the victory are presupposed in the action and in the choric praises and worship of the heavenly creatures. The detailed description of and the attributes ascribed to God suggest that his universal sovereignty has been called in question. Otherwise why should not the character of God merely be assumed? The notes of dramatic preparation and of suspense point ahead.

Scene 2. At the opening of chapter 5, John sees in the right hand of God who sat on the throne a book "written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals." (5:1). Then he sees a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice,

> Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? (5:2).

No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was found who could open the book. Then John states,

> And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look thereon. (5:4).

One of the elders speaks to him saying,

> **Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seals thereof.** (5:5).

When the Apocalyptist himself looks again, he sees the answer to the problem over which he is so greatly concerned and in connection with which the problem of evil itself is paramount.

> And I saw in the midst of[1] the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a

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1. The marginal reading "between the throne" has been used in the Revised Standard Version instead of "in the midst of the throne."

> Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits o of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. (5:6,7).

The remaining verses of the chapter record the response of those who witness and understand the significance of the great event of all ages that has just been accomplished. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, as this event marking a new peak of dramatic intensity occurs, fall down before the Lamb and sing a new song--a song of redemption--made possible only because of the unique work of Christ in behalf of men.

> Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth. (5:9,10).

Also around the throne there were hosts of angels who join the elders and the living creatures in a great seven-fold doxology--

> Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing. (5:12).

Finally every created thing whether in heaven or on the earth, whether under the earth or on the sea, respond harmoniously--

> Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. (5:13b).

As is obvious Christ is the central character in scene 2. Instead, however, of appearing as like unto a son of man in

the midst of the churches, as in Act I, he comes forth from the midst of the throne of God and from the midst of the four created beings and of the twenty-four elders, who are generally representative of redeemed humanity, as a Lamb who had been slain but was no longer dead. He was standing, and at the appropriate time he came forth to loose the seals and to reveal the message of the book which he took from the hand of God. He is uniquely qualified for the task which he is about to perform. The forces of evil had gone the limit in their attack upon him. He had suffered death but in this scene death has no more claim upon him. In all points he has been seen to have overcome (cf. 1:17,18; 3:21) and he stands as the one who alone is able and worthy to reveal to man the mystery and significance of the purpose of God yet to be accomplished. The seven horns are suggestive of strength made perfect, and the seven eyes, of insight and perhaps also of wisdom and activity, but identified with the seven Spirits of God.

To explain and to interpret the work of the Lamb is the task of the heavenly creatures about the throne and this task they perform in their outbursts of praise recorded as choric interludes. They proclaim that Christ as the Lamb is worthy to unfold the mystery contained in the sealed book because he was slain and had purchased or reconciled men to God with his blood and made them to be a kingdom

and priests giving them authority to reign with him. Along with God, Christ is proclaimed by the heavenly creatures as worthy of all worship or honor which could be bestowed upon him.

Again as in scene 2 of Act I the dramatic value of the scene just described is largely preparatory and anticipatory. The conflict draws nearer. The chief warrier is again presented and all those who welcome his kingdom join in rendering to him the utmost praise in complete recognition of his leadership. The nature of the conflict is still a mystery in part at least but at this stage of the dramatic development a victory is won and further conflict is certain.. A battle is inevitably approaching but the victory that has been gained is both instrumental and suggestive of the outcome of the further conflict.

Scene 3. After the introduction of the Lamb who alone was found worthy to reveal the mystery of the sealed book the third scene follows quite naturally. In it the first six seals are unloosed by the Lamb and each time a special event of world-wide significance occurs. As each of the first four seals is loosed one of the living creatures says "come" and in each a horse appears--first a white horse with a rider having a bow in his hand and unto whom was given a crown since he was coming forth to conquer; secondly, a red horse unto whom there was given a great sword and

power to take peace from the earth; third, a black horse significant of extreme famine; and fourth, a pale horse having Death as his rider and Hades following after. To him was given authority over the fourth part of the earth to kill with the sword, famine, death, or with the wild beasts. When the fifth seal was opened the martyrs under the altar were revealed to the writer as they cried out to God for vengeance upon the evil forces which had been and still were at work upon the earth. They were told to be patient and to rest yet until their brethren upon the earth, who like themselves must be killed at the hand of evil, had suffered their lot. When the sixth seal was opened yet greater and more universal calamnities were threatened. The earth shook, the sun was darkened, the moon became as blood, and the stars in great numbers fell to the earth. At such great disturbances the wicked men of the earth realized their guilt and the significance of the day of God's wrath[1] and of the judgment it brought upon them. The scene closes with the question raised by these wicked men, "Who is able to stand?"

This scene is significant to the conflict in that it represents judgment from the hand of God released upon the earth through Christ. In Act I Satan was seen to have invaded the rightful domain of God and as a result judgment was promised upon him, his work, and those loyal to his cause. With the unloosing of the seals judgment upon this

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1. See 68 ff. of this work.

arch-enemy of all good is begun. The expression "it was given" is significant of the relation of this judgment to the throne, the source of authority. From those who have sealed their faith with their blood there comes the appeal on the basis of God's holiness and trueness for the execution of justice upon evil. Hence on the part of these who have proved themselves loyal to the purpose of God the execution of justice does not appear as an evil but as a righteous act. Only to those whose goal in life is so out of harmony with the character and purpose of God that in the presence of his activity they are miserable and fearful with condemnation is the judgment considered evil. Thus two opposing points of view are introduced--that of the martyrs who ask for justice and that of those who have become so attached to the things of the world and of Satan that they would rather die than to face righteous judgment. If the point of view is man-centered the attempt to distinguish evil from good is one which ends in confusion and contradiction. By executing justice God would be considered by one group as good and by another as evil. Hence it is not accidental that special attention is given to establish a correct point of view as is found in the great Christophany and Theophany set forth in the opening scenes of Acts I and II.

Scene 4. After the great disorder both in heaven and upon earth caused by the opening of the sixth seal an

interlude occurs during which time the process of destruction is halted until account has been taken of the righteous. In contrast to those of 6:15-17 two groups are pictured in chapter 7. Of these the first group is spoken of as 144,000 in number who are sealed with the seal of God and who are taken out of the twelve tribes of Israel. Then the Apocalyptist sees another group, a numberless multitude, who having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb stand before the throne doing service to God. Because of their relation to God and to the Lamb these are freed from the activity of any evil force and are granted a life filled with joy and harmonized with the purpose of God.

The significance of this scene in the conflict is that by it those who have placed their faith in God are assured of his deepest concern and extreme care in protecting them during this period of judgment from the destruction and punishment which it brings upon evil. An element of restraint in the midst of universal disorder and destruction indicates control. God is taking the offensive in putting down evil; hence the progress of the conflict is in God's hand and at his command and for the sake of his chosen ones it ceases or moves onward. The spontaneous outbursts of praise and of worship to God and to the Lamb add to the dramatic value and point to the importance of the conflict.

Scene 5. Chapters 8 and 9 comprising scene five center

around the opening of the seventh seal and the sounding of the first six trumpets. The throne as introduced in chapter 4 remains the source of absolute authority. At the opening of this seventh seal a brief silence occurs in heaven and to seven angels who stand before God in heaven there were given seven trumpets. While the seven angels were preparing to sound their trumpets recognition was made in heaven of the prayers of the saints and signifying further judgment is the fire of the altar cast down upon the earth, and the thunder, and voices, and lightenings and the earthquake which resulted. Like the seals which were opened in chapter 6 the first four trumpets are closely related to each other, the fifth and sixth are brought in together, and the seventh is quite widely separated from the first six. As each of these trumpets is sounded great destruction follows--first upon the earth; second, the sea; third, the rivers and fountains of waters; fourth, the sun, moon, and stars; fifth, the abyss; and at the sixth the men of earth were directly attacked and smitten with plagues. The devastation set in motion as these first six trumpets were sounded, however, is only partial though all parts of the universe are affected. The expression "third part" occurs fourteen times in reference to the extent of the destruction in these chapters. Apparently complete destruction is withheld in order that men seeing their wicked ways might repent and turn to God. At least for the most part, however, they refuse this opportunity.

A problem remains concerning these forces, especially those loosed at the fifth and sixth trumpets, as to whether or not they are agents of Satan turned loose by God upon Satan's own followers or whether they were direct agents of God. The introduction of the angel of the abyss and of his servants called locusts brings into the conflict either new agents of evil or old agents under new names. The activity of the locusts was limited so that those with the seal of God could not be touched by them and in relation to the wicked men of earth they were not allowed to kill but only to torment them for a limited period stated as five months. Their torment, however, was even more severe than death and for those men on earth who had cast their lot with Satan there was no escape. In permitting or perhaps compelling those who were probably among the forces of evil themselves to make evil repulsive to their own followers the strategy of one of greater authority and wisdom than that of Satan is reflected. The very instruments perhaps reserved for the torture of the righteous are loosed upon those loyal to Satan. Of the three "woes" announced in verse 13, this is the first and two remain. At the sounding of the sixth trumpet the conflict is even further intensified. Those loyal to Satan and evil are helpless to resist the innumerable army at the command of the one in control. While the destructive agents loosed at the fifth trumpet were not allowed to kill; at the

sixth, a third part of the men were killed by the plagues of fire, smoke, and brimstone loosed upon them. Those who escaped, however, still refused to repent of their sins but persisted in worshipping false gods and in resisting the claims of God upon them, Hence these forces are set at work by God's permission if not at his command and their activity is limited by his ultimate control.

As to the dramatic development of the conflict it might be noted that the progress continues and conflict is being intensified. The silence in heaven at the opening of the scene prepares the way for the significance of the pending judgment to be realized and creates mystery and arouses suspense. With the opening of the seventh and last seal the full revelation of the great mystery might naturally be expected, but instead seven angels with trumpets appear and prepare to sound and further and even greater destruction occurs. The world in general is brought into the destructive whirl as the scene of the conflict. The suffering and destruction increases as the action continues; the lack of any active or effective organized resistance on the part of evil is notable and perhaps reflects the helplessness of evil in the face of righteous judgment.

Scene 6. Like all the action thus far, scene 6 points ahead. Another strong angel appears from heaven with a little book opened. His authority is in the name of the

Eternal One, he who created the heaven, the earth, and the sea and all that is contained in each. Having come from heaven and standing with one foot upon the earth and the other upon the sea his proclamation is one to be of universal significance. He announces that the mystery of God will be finished when the seventh angel sounds according to the good tidings spoken by the prophets. If the little book is the same as that in chapter 5 and represents the now-revealed will of God in contrast to his concealed purpose in chapter 5 the eating of this little book by John the representative of the faithful on earth might well indicate the willing acceptance of God's revealed will and the further proclamation of God's purpose which will of necessity in order that his rule may be established bring further destruction and suffering to the earth in order that the work of Satan so deeply written upon the earth might be completely erased. As related to the conflict as a whole this scene brings an unexpected delay preparing the way for the great momentous event that is about to occur when the seventh trumpet is sounded.

Scene 7. In 11:1-13 is another section which, though for the most part parenthetical, occupies an important place in the dramatic development as a whole. The leading characters are the Apocalyptist, John, the servant of Christ in verses 1 and 2; and in 3 through 13, the two witnesses of

Christ. John is commanded to measure the temple of God. The two witnesses are prophets who testify of God's purpose and through whom even the enemies of God are made fearful and give glory to God. The strong angel who in chapter 10 speaks in the name of God apparently is the one who continues to speak to John. While the two witnesses cannot be identified by name it is significant to note that these who are also called prophets are protected until they have finished their testimony; then after being slain in the war with the beast they were, after a certain time, raised up again and caught up into heaven.

This scene serves a significant place in the development of the drama. Introduced at a time when the tension is at an all-time high it, as a parenthesis, continues to point ahead and even beyond the immediate future which otherwise appears of utmost significance at this stage. The introduction of the temple points to the permanent relation of God to man to be established in the new order. The command "Rise and measure" is a note both of dramatic and of actual preparation for the future. The two witnesses also called prophets may well be forerunners prophesying by their very lives the future career both immediate and ultimate of those on earth who would dare like them to be faithful witnesses. The conflict with evil is apparent and evil in the person of the beast rises from the abyss in resistance against these witnesses. Though the beast appeared to be victorious the

victory was only temporary and was completely upset by the intervention of God.

Scene 8. As a transition to scene 8 and thus to the remaining verses of chapter eleven verse 14 contains the announcement of the second woe being past and of the proximity of the third. Verses 15 through 19 deal briefly with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and with the proclamation of God's sovereignty over the kingdom of the world by voices in heaven. Immediately after this proclamation and the opening of the temple of God in heaven there follow further indications of judgment and destruction in the form of lightenings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and great hail. Verses 17 and 18 contain the notes of thanksgiving expressed by the twenty-four elders to God because he had used his power to reign and to execute judgment upon evil by destroying those that destroy the earth.

The verb form used in verse 15 is apparently what Dana and Mantey call the dramatic aorist.[1] The sense of urgency is characteristic of the entire Book. At the end of the loosing of the seals there was reason to expect the great stroke of God that would terminate the conflict, and now

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1. H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament. New York: The Macmillan Company. On page 198 the authors state that "The aorist may be used for stating a present reality with the certitude of a past event. This idiom is a device for emphasis. It is commonly used of a state which has just been realized, or a result which has just been accomplished, or is on the point of being accomplished. For other examples see John 13:31, Matthew 3:17, or I. Corinthians 4:18.

even moreso at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Yet the events which follow the proclamation are suggestive of even further conflict and perhaps the suggestion by Dana and Mantey that this dramatic aorist may be used of a result that is on the point of being accomplished is to be applied here.

This closing scene of Act II, however, marks a great climax. It is at least highly indicative of the end result of the conflict. The chief events of the entire Act have pointed beyond themselves to that which lay ahead. The conflict as treated in Act II was seen largely as the execution of the judgment of the creator, the sovereign ruler, superior in every comparable respect, upon the creature who of necessity is inferior. The powers of evil had no alternative other than that of accepting the judgment of God upon them. Yet they refused to give glory to God until at the end of scene 7, and apparently rejected all opportunity given them to repent.

Act III Between chapters 11 and 12 and hence between Acts II and III there occurs a definite break in the movement of thought. The relation between the two, however, is an unsettled problem and must be recognized as such. Just as Act II was characterized by its potential and partial judgment, so Act III is primarily concerned with the battle itself as a conflict involving two forces actively opposing each other. At the opening of the Act the setting is in heaven, then it

shifts to earth and in scene six both heaven and earth are scenes of action. The leading characters are limited to four--the dragon (Satan), the beast, the false prophet (the second beast), and the Lamb (Christ). As compared with other parts of the Book these chapters stand out as the most mysterious and likewise as the least understood and most misunderstood. Though interpreters differ widely and hopelessly in relating these characters and their activity to events contemporary with those of John's day or of any later period of time in history it must be agreed that they occupy a key position in the book of The Revelation and in the conflict as well. To some extent, however, they can and have been identified in relation to the opposing forces of good and evil or to God and Satan.

Act III is subdivided into six scenes each of which is significantly related to the conflict as a whole. The first (12:1-6) is a scene of preparation for conflict, the second (12:7-12) is concerning the war between Michael and Satan, the third (12:13-17) deals with the conflict between the woman of scene 1 and Satan, the fourth (13:1-10) introduces the beast, the fifth (13:11-18) presents the false prophet or the second beast, and the sixth (14:1-20), the Lamb standing on mount Zion and the visions of the harvest of the earth.

Scene 1. The first scene is that of two signs in heaven--the first of a woman about to give birth to a child, and the

second of a great red dragon who is standing before the woman bent upon devouring her child. The man child destined to rule all the nations is Christ and it has been suggested that the woman may well be the Jewish nation embodying those who are faithful and so heirs to the promises of God. The dragon is identified as Satan himself. The man child which was born and which was destined to rule all the nations was caught up unto God and unto his throne and the woman fled from before the dragon to the wilderness unto a place specially prepared for her by God. Hence here the conflict between Christ and Satan is seen as deliberate active combat. Satan awaits his opportunity in a single blow to destroy the one through whom he must eventually be brought to submission and so to wreck the purpose of God; but God understands his strategy and prohibits its accomplishment. Here both sides are taking the offensive in the conflict. Satan's immediate intent is made impossible through the intervention of God to safeguard his own purpose. The chief purpose of this scene is to point out the early antagonism of Satan to the purpose of God and to prepare for the conflict fast coming to an issue.

Scene 2. The second scene also is one seen as occurring in heaven. It portrays the war between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels. The great dragon--also identified with the old serpent of Genesis 3, the Devil, Satan,

And described as the deceiver of the whole world--and his angels are defeated and cast down to the earth. Great rejoicing in heaven followed. A feeling of sympathy is expressed for those upon the earth because Satan comes in great wrath knowing that his time is short. The proclamation by the interpretive voice from heaven in 12:10 bears a striking resemblance to that of 11:15. Both are indicative of final defeat for Satan. In 11:13 even those loyal to his cause were apparently forced to give glory to God and in 12:12 Satan himself is seen to know that his time is short and to recognize that he cannot stand before the judgment of God executed upon him. Henceforth Satan bears a significant inferiority complex for which he makes various attempts to compensate. The significance of his future career is decided in heaven, yet final judgment is for the time withheld. After recognizing the position which the man child was to fill he had failed in his attempt to destroy this child later to assign him to his doom. Now his place in heaven was gone but he appears to have retained great power and a great wrath in his retreat before the forces of God.

Scene 3. In scene 3 the place of action has shifted to the earth and Satan in his great wrath against God sets out to persecute the woman and the rest of her seed--those that "keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus." Here the conflict is between Satan and the Church

which is heir of God's promises to his chosen people. Satan's strategy is made ineffective by the help which was given the woman enabling her to escape. Thus far Satan's strategy has been ineffective at every point in Acts I and II, but the conflict continues.

Scene 4. With scene 4 another character, the beast, comes forth to engage in the conflict on the side of evil. This beast comes up out of the sea and is endowed with his position and with his authority by the dragon (Satan). Hence in relation to Satan the beast stands as servant and co-worker. To the people of the earth the beast made a very attractive appearance but to the Apocalyptist the real nature revealed in the beast was one both crafty and devouring. The people were so influenced that they not only worshipped the beast but also Satan who gave him his authority. Forgetting God they were deceived to believe that the beast was beyond all comparison with any other.

Working in the power of Satan and with his complete approval the beast exercised no serious scruples and hence knew no bounds except those imposed upon him by God. He had ability to speak great things and to defy God by blaspheming his name and his tabernacle made up of those who dwell in heaven with God. With such devices he won people to his leadership. His influence became so great that he could make war with the saints and overcome them in battle.

He did not have power, however, to cause those whose names were written in the book of life of the Lamb to worship him as do his own followers. Also his activity is confined to that of a very limited period stated as forty-two months.

In scenes 1, 2, and 3, Satan's efforts were unsuccessful. His strategy and tactics become much more effective in scene 4, as he deals more indirectly by concealing his will in that of another to whom he delegates his authority. The farther removed from God both he and those with whom he deals stand, the more effective are their efforts. The beast makes for him the most spectacular comeback against God and those loyal to God recorded thus far in the dramatic development.

Scene 5. The next scene catching the eye of the Apocalyptist is that of another beast-like figure coming up out the earth. This one, known elsewhere as the false prophet, exercises all the authority of the first beast and hence of Satan himself. His object is that of setting forth the beast as the supreme object of worship and that of causing the whole world to worship the beast. In accomplishing this end he does great signs so spectacular as that of making fire come down from heaven. By these signs many people of the earth are deceived and attention is drawn not only to the one doing the signs but to the beast in whose presence he worked and even to Satan or the dragon whose power he exercised.

The effectiveness of his strategy and tactics is demonstrated by the way he is able to influence the people of the earth to make an image to the beast who had recovered from the death-stroke. After the image was made the false prophet was given power, whether actually or in some magical sense, to give breath to the image of the beast so that it might both speak and cause those who refuse to bow down in worship before it to be killed. Hence this image was used as an agent of his propaganda. But he desires to go even further in insuring loyalty to this kingdom of evil. Therefore he requires all to receive a mark upon their hand or forehead indicative of the name of the beast or the number of his name. This number given as six hundred and sixty-six has been the subject of much conjecture. Perhaps the number had some significance in that day which has been lost sight of; at any rate it is the number of a man.

In scenes 4 and 5 it has been noted that both the beast and the false prophet worked under limitation and exercised authority delegated to them. This authority from Satan was given them in order that they might win from the inhabitants of the earth a complete loyalty in a common course of action. The earth is the battle field and in scene 5 the forces of evil under the leadership of the false prophet have made an advance even more striking than that staged in scene 4. They have not only reasserted their claims but have taken drastic

action against the forces of good in order to establish and to insure their kingdom upon the earth. In a spirit of defi--ance they have cast aside the claims of God and have exer-cised all the liberty allowed them to establish a kingdom of evil under the authority of Satan. Unscrupulously they have proceeded as if there were no judgment and no higher authority in the universe than themselves. They have assumed that theirs was the final word.

Scene 6. Scene 6 thus begins with evil almost complete--ly in control upon the earth. Satan has come back since his attempts in Act I with a renewed desire to propagate his in--fluence and has attempted to make the earth a safe center of authority for his kingdom. Through his agents and the de-ceitful measures which they sponsor the whole world-order has been brought into harmony with his designs. As has been repeatedly suggested in the course of the drama judgment is imminent and in scene 6 as Act III comes to a close the im-mediate gains of evil are again seen in the light of God's judgment. In contrast to the three leading agents of evil there stands the Lamb upon mount Zion. With the Lamb are 144,000 who have his name and that of his Father written upon their foreheads, who were the first-fruits among the redeemed, and who are described as undefiled and without blemish. Then the writer sees three angels flying in mid-heaven one following the other. The first comes bearing

eternal good tidings announcing that the hour of God's jugment has come and requests an attitude of fear and of worship on the part of those dwelling upon earth. The second announces the fall of Babylon[1] the great center of wickedness upon the earth, and the third announces the eternal torment which is to come upon any who worships the beast and his image or receives his mark upon his hand or forehead. God's wrath prepared for such a one is described as being "unmixed in the cup of his anger." The punishment is to be in the presence of the angels and of the Lamb. At this time those who have chosen to stand loyal to God and to the Lamb are cited as worthy of special recognition and blessing because of their faithfulness to God.

The last two paragraphs of the chapter included in this scene are given to a treatment of what is called the reaping of the earth. The first reaper apparently is Christ himself who goes forth at the command coming from the temple of God. The second reaper is an angel who at the appointed time gathers what remains of the harvest of the earth. The harvest to be reaped is the inhabitants of the earth. The first reaping may include both good and bad but perhaps only the good, while the second is certainly upon the evil who dwell upon the earth. At the second harvest which is said to be fully ripe all is cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God and from this winepress a great river of blood proceeds.

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1. See 106-9 of this work.

Hence in scene 6 the arrogancy of Satan and of his agents demonstrated in the preceding scenes is set over against the judgment upon his kingdom which is pending. A preview of this judgment is set forth by which those in John's day as in any other where evil is apparently in complete sway are warned against accepting the claims of evil and so rejecting Christ the one who will ultimately see them through any conflict regardless of how hopeless their cause may seem.

In Act III the conflict has reached its greatest peak of intensity. Evil has come forth with an all-out effort to establish itself upon the earth but judgment upon it is already pending if not actually begun. In scenes 1 and 2 Satan's purpose is significantly defeated and his retreat is seen to have begun. A strikingly significant comeback is staged in scenes 4 and 5 by the beast and the false prophet who act in the authority of Satan. While the real turning point in the drama is perhaps to be found in the failure of the dragon to devour the man child or in scene two with his expulsion from heaven it is in scene 6 that the great climax occurs for those on earth after which there can be no further question as to the outcome of the conflict. Yet the conflict is not resolved and hence continues on.

<u>Act IV</u>. In Act IV the conflict is carried to its final end. The dualism underlying the action of the Book and hence of the drama heretofore is at last resolved. Therefore

the final strokes and the eternal destinies meted out to the defeated force are the major items for consideration in Act IV. This unit of action is that described in chapters 15 through 20 of The Revelation; it may be subdivided into seven scenes--the first (15:1-8) again one of preparation for further conflict, the second (16:1-21) centers about the seven bowls, in the third (17:1-19:10) the great harlot is the significant character, in the fourth (19:11-20:3) the King appears and the beast and false prophet receive their doom, the fifth (20:4-6) concerns the period stated as a thousand years during which time Satan is bound and the martyrs and those who refused the mark of the beast reign with Christ upon the earth, the sixth (20:7-10) concerns the eternal destiny of Satan, and the seventh (20:11-15) the last judgment and the destiny of the wicked.

Scene 1. In 14:10 the wrath of God was said to have been prepared "unmixed" and in chapter 15 the seven angels appear having the seven last plagues by which the wrath of God is finally to be executed. Judgment heretofore has been characterized by its being partial and limited. Now a complete execution of God's wrath upon evil is about to be accomplished. But first those who have resisted the claims of the beast sing the song of Moses and the Lamb--a song celebrating their deliverance with praises to God their eternal king, sovereign, holy, righteous, and true. The temple of

God in heaven was opened but filled with the smoke of such glory that no one was able to enter in until the seven plagues should be finished. The seven bowls are handed to the seven angels by one of the four living creatures. This judgment which is prepared in heaven is God's judgment upon the forces of evil.

Scene 2. Scene 2 describes the effect of the seven bowls of God's wrath which at his own command are poured out upon the earth. Like the partial judgment at the sounding of the trumpets this complete judgment comes with increasing intensity. Also like the trumpets the first bowl is poured out into the earth, the second into the sea, the third into the rivers and fountains, the fourth upon the sun, the fifth upon the throne of the beast, the sixth upon the great river Euphrates, and the seventh upon the air. The first became an annoying and painful sore upon those who submitted to the authority of the beast, the second in causing the sea to become blood brought death to every living thing in it, the third in turning the rivers and fountains into blood caused those who had shed the blood of saints and prophets to drink blood themselves, the fourth caused men to be scorched with great heat; but, rather than to repent and to give glory to God, these wicked men blaspheme the name of God--the one who alone could control the plagues. The pouring out of the fifth bowl upon the throne of the beast

brought darkness to the kingdom of evil and brought pain so great as to cause them to gnaw their own tongues. The manifestation of the rebellion increased with their pain and they repented not. The purpose of the sixth bowl was to prepare the way for the conflict--termed "the war of the great day of God, the Almighty." Unclean spirits or spirits of demons were sent forth by the three chief personal agents of evil to gather the kings of the earth together to the place of battle. When the seventh angel pours out his bowl the announcement comes from the throne "It is done"; and, just as after the announcements of 11:15, there follow in the same order lightenings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and hail. The earthquake is described as the greatest and mightiest since men were upon the earth. The great city was divided into three parts, the islands fled away, and the mountains were leveled. God's wrath is especially executed against the wicked city spoken of as Babylon. Large hailstones fall from heaven upon men and men blaspheme God all the more.

Thus in scene 2 God's judgment upon evil continues. There is a striking resemblance in the effect of the bowls and of the trumpets for which it is difficult to account. Perhaps the chief distinction is that the trumpets represent partial judgment and the bowls bring this judgment to its completion. Instead of repenting those who persist in allying

themselves with evil are spoken of in three instances as blaspheming God. The dragon, the beast and the false prophet rebel against God's judgment by assembling and organizing for the great and decisive battle. Christ, in connection with this preparation of evil, states that his coming will be sudden and unexpected as that of a thief and he requests his followers to watch and to be ready for his coming.

Scene 3. In some respects scene 3 may be considered a parenthetical exposition of 16:19. In this scene the chief seat of evil upon earth receives its final destiny--that of complete destruction. There does not seem to be a continuity in the progress within this scene as there is in some of those preceding. Everything in the scene, however, is related to the fall of the wicked city. First it might be noted that the writer is called aside by one of the seven angels of scene 2 and the angel undertakes to show and to explain the judgment to be executed upon this great ally and propagator of evil. In picturesque and live words this great city is personified before the Apocalyptist as a wicked woman--a great harlot drunken with the blood of the saints. A note of mystery, of conflict, and of vengeance and judgment is suggested as the nature of the wicked woman is set forth and explained. Then follows the announcement of the fall of the city, the significance of the fall for both the righteous and the unrighteous, the fall foretold and illustrated and

finally the rejoicing over the fall of this great city pic--tured as the central seat and headquarters of evil.

The city called "Babylon" but personified by the great harlot and, as suggested, perhaps representing Rome is seen as having allied herself with the beast that is about to come up out of the abyss and to go unto perdition. Eventually the beast turns against the city and the kings that rule with the beast make war upon the city and bring it utterly to ruin. The explanation of this attack and destruction of one ally of evil by another is given in 17:17, "For God did put in their hearts to do his mind." Here again the strategy of God is seen in contrast to that of evil--evil eventually makes war against itself while God on the other hand causes even his enemies to accomplish his will, to punish and even to destroy themselves. The city has allied itself with the beast who acts in Satan's stead and consequently, as a city, is dealt out the punishment any non-surrendering ally of a defeated kingdom could expect.

The contrast between those attached to evil in chapter 18 and those who remained loyal to God in 19:1-10 is striking indeed. The kings of the earth who through allying themselves with evil lived wantonly partaking with the great harlot in her sin now weep and wail over the burning city fearing the torment which may come to them, and the merchants who became rich by her also stand afar off for fear, and weep and mourn.

Likewise the shipmasters cast dust on their heads and weep and mourn because their livelihood has come to an end. All three groups join in a lamentation "Woe, woe." Through this personified agent of evil were all the nations deceived and by her was the blood of prophets and saints shed. As opposed to this doleful cry of woe is the rejoicing of those in heaven who give all praise to God and join together in the Hallelujah chorus. In 19:6-8 is a sample of this great praise--

> Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her, that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Thus with this great rejoicing over the newly-gained victory the announcement and invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb is given. For the message the angel has given, John feels so grateful that he falls down at the feet of the angel to worship, but the angel explains his relation as a fellow-servant with John and his brethren and directs all worship and praise to God who has wrought the great victory.

At this stage of the conflict evil is becoming cleared off the scene of action and the way is being prepared for what has been announced as a marriage of the Lamb and his Church. After this marriage union is effected Christ is to dwell with his people for ever. But only the announcement and invitation to the marriage supper is given out. Further

preparation must be made. Hence here as elsewhere in the drama attention is directed ahead to future victories rather than back to those in the past. In scene 2 it was the reference to Babylon that suggested and prepared for scene 3, now it is the announcement of the permanent union of Christ with his bride the Church that directs attention ahead.

Scene 4. It is scene 4 that at last brings forth the significant event which has been patiently awaited and toward which all else in the great drama has been pointing. Christ again appears as the central character. In 1:13 he appeared as one like unto a son of man in the midst of the churches, in 5:5,6, as a Lamb stand as though it had been slain who alone was able and worthy to open the sealed book, in 14:1 as the Lamb standing on mount Zion, and now as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. The heaven is opened and a white horse appears bearing Christ who appropriately is called any one of the three names by which he is introduced--"Faithful and True," "The Word of God," and "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." Following him are armies also out of heaven riding white horses and clothed in fine linen white and pure. He appears as a mighty warrior with eyes as a flame of fire. Out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword with which he smites the nations and brings them under submission to his own righteous rule. He gives expression to the fierceness of God's wrath against evil, yet he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood

indicative of his own sacrificial death and by which he identified himself as the one who "loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood." (1:5).

A great army under the leadership of the beast and the kings of the earth make war against Christ and his army but to no avail. Though the conflict itself is not described the preparation and the results reported are sufficient to indicate that the defeat was a decisive and a humiliating one. The beast and the false prophet through whom those who had received the mark of the beast were deceived were both cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. The rest of the army including the kings and captains were killed by the sword of Christ and their bodies were left to be devoured by the birds that fly in mid-heaven. Then the way was clear to deal with Satan himself. An angel from heaven proceeded to bind Satan with a great chain, to unlock the abyss and to cast him therein for a thousand years. The angel then shut the abyss and sealed it that Satan should deceive the nations no more for a thousand years.

Hence in scene 4 the powers of evil are brought into complete control. The time long promised has at last arrived. Satan's kingdom is demolished and his agents destroyed. He himself is under complete domination by God. But after the thousand years Satan is to be released; and the conflict is not at a complete end.

Scene 5. Here is pictured the Millenium, the period of time occurring after Satan has been bound and cast into the abyss and before he is loosed again. Those who refused to receive the mark of the beast and the martyrs lived again and reigned with Christ during this period of a thousand years. These who reign with him are eternally free from the power of evil and are priests of God and of Christ. During this time evil cannot assert itself; hence no element of conflict appears. The nature of those to be ruled is not treated but there is the possibility that some of them at least like Satan himself in the abyss submitted to this righteous rule because it was forced upon them rather than having chosen it for themselves. At any rate where the activity of Satan and his followers is at a minimum there the element of conflict is reduced accordingly.

Scene 6. In 20:7-10 the final destiny of Satan is assigned. The "lake of fire" has already been mentioned as the eternal dwelling place into which the beast and the false prophet have been cast. Now after the thousand-year period Satan is again loosed from the abyss in which he has been imprisoned. He still retains his charm to those of the world, and as he hoes forth to deceive the nations and to gather an army together he finds many yet willing to be deceived by him. With an innumerable army which he assembles he goes up to attack the camp of the saints and the beloved

city. Fire comes down from heaven, however, and destroys his army which he has assembled and he himself is cast into the lake of fire with his colleagues, the beast and the false prophet, where the three are to suffer eternal torment.

Scene 7. In this fourth major unit of action the great judgment scene completes the picture of the destinies assigned to the forces of evil. A great white throne appears. Such glory is revealed in the One who sat upon this throne of judgment that before his face the earth and heaven fled away. Whether the judge is God himself or the glorified Christ who throughout has been executing the judgment of God is not stated. That Christ does share the throne of God in the new order is certain, however, from 22:3. At any rate the dead were called forth from the various places where they rested including death and Hades for judgment before the One who sat upon the throne; the books were opened and judgment was pronounced on the basis of the works that were on record against them. Among the books opened was the book of life and any whose name was not found written therein was cast into the lake of fire. In 21:8 it is stated that among those who have their part in the lake of fire are the fearful, the unbelieving, abominable, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolators, and all liars. This lake of fire is the second death, the doom of the wicked which they share with Satan, the beast, and the false prophet through whose efforts they

have consented to be deceived.

The conflict is at an end; but can the drama simply close with the judgment upon evil? If the action of the past has been directed according to a fixed purpose, must not this teleological aspect of the entire drama be seen and understood in terms of a final goal? Is the putting down of evil a goal worthy and sufficient in itself? Certainly at this stage God's sovereignty has been established. The forces of evil have all been judged and assigned to their final destiny. The old earth and heaven have fled away from before the face of the One who sat upon the great white throne of judgment. But throughout the drama God's purpose has constantly pointed beyond this negative aspect of judgment upon evil, toward something more positive. While the wicked have gone to their just reward what does the future hold for the righteous? Hence Act V is not simply an appendage to the drama but rather the positive counterpart of Act IV descriptive of the goal toward which all God's activity has been directed.

<u>Act V</u>. This final Act of the drama, as suggested, is characterized by its description of the eternal blessedness into which only the righteous may enter. In scene 1 all things are said to have been made new and in the scene the new heaven and new earth and the new relation between God and man are more fully described and illustrated. Scene 2

gives the concluding words of Jesus and of John and extends an invitation to come and to partake of the water of life to all those who are athirst.

Scene 1. At the opening of scene 1 all the former agents and instruments of evil as well as that which was defiled by them have been cleared from the scene. Only God and those with him in heaven and those on earth who have retained their utter loyalty to him remain. Then the new heaven and the new earth appear and the Apocalyptist sees what he recognizes as the new Jerusalem, the holy city descending out of heaven from God and bearing God's glory. Here his own account:

> And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more; the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. (21:3-5a).

The new Jerusalem is said to be both the place of God's dwelling with man and the "wife of the Lamb." It thus not only represents the permanent meeting place between God and man but also the eternal goal of God's activity and revelation of himself to man. A detailed description of the beauty and glory of the holy city is given to the Apocalyptist by one of the angels who took part in the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath upon the earth. The Jewish concept of their beloved city in its glory would not be complete

without the temple. But John writes:

> And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. (21:22,23).

In the city there shall be no fear, no night, nothing unclean, no deceitfulness, and no curse. Rather there shall be "a river of water of life bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1), and on each side of the river "the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (22:2), "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein" (22:3), and "the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." (22:5).

Hence in contrast to the fatal destiny of the wicked is the eternal blessedness which comes when, after evil has been judged and all barriers of sin that separate God and man are removed, God for ever dwells with man. The inevitable dualism which underlay the preceding world order has been dissolved and the unrest and disorder which it brought has been banished for ever.

Scene 2. Just as scene 1 of Act I served to introduce the message of <u>The Revelation</u> so this final scene is a conclusion most appropriate to both the Book itself and to the drama it contains. John emphasizes the authenticity of this

message of Christ, the personal reality with which it came to him, and his own response to it and to those through whom it came. A note of urgency is again sounded in the angel's directing John not to seal up the words of the prophecy of the Book because the time is at hand. A beatitude has been directed to those who keep the message contained in this Book and now another to those who have prepared to enter the city by their having been cleansed from their sins. The message is duly authenticated by Jesus himself and a universal appeal is made to anyone who is athirst to come and to take of the water of life freely. Jesus speaking as the one who testifies to these things says "Yea: I come quickly," and John speaking in behalf of himself and his fellow-sufferers replies "Amen: come, Lord Jesus." The benediction closes the Book and with the Book the dramatic development and divine interpretation of this the greatest conflict of all time.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Concerning the Issues of the Conflict.

As related primarily to man and to the agents of evil. The widespread use of physical symbols to convey the more difficult but accordingly more significant moral and spiritual truths or to reveal the nature of outstanding characters tends to blind many to the really great issues underlying The Revelation. Despite the emphasis given to such physical aspects of the struggle the more hidden moral and spiritual elements predominate in the thought and purpose of the Book. If the issue were simply physical such that the stronger force might exert his power to subjugate the weaker the conflict might have been resolved at once. In relation to man and to the agents of evil, however, the issue is largely moral, and physical superiority is unable to bring a solution to a moral problem—to say nothing of the spiritual or religious implications. Both man and the agents of evil seem to have been given the power of self-determination capable of being exercised within certain limits. For this moral endowment God himself shows respect by his refusal to violate it with his superior might and by his granting to them power either to accept or to reject his own will.

This moral nature given by God to his creatures is a

sacred trust for which they incur upon themselves responsibility toward God. In the conflict moral guilt plays a prominent part being characteristic of the agents of evil just as moral righteousness is with respect to those of good. Thus this feeling of guilt which characterizes both the agents of evil and those persons of earth who ally themselves with them appears as a moral phenomenon, a complex resulting from the wilful violation of the responsibility incurred by the acceptance of any noble endowment. Just as when Jesus was on earth in person the evil spirits felt uncomfortable in his presence (cf. James 2:19, Mark 1:24; 5:7) and the evil men bade him depart out of their borders (cf. Mark 5:11), so now in the presence of God or of activity directed by God through Christ those who have allied themselves with the powers of evil seek death rather than to stand before God and his righteous judgment. (cf. 6:16,17). The presence of such a strong sense of self-recognized guilt testifies to the moral implications of the conflict.

A study of the attitudes or of the hidden moral dispositions characteristic of the agents of evil, of those who have allied themselves with evil or of those who at this time were allowing themselves to become allied with evil is rewarding when pursued in the light of the character and judgment of God or Christ and lays open the great moral battlefield where much of the conflict occurs. The messages

to the seven churches reflect a careless attitude and even portents of apostacy as over against past and present faithfulness and goodness. The individual churches in whole or in part are condemned and hence stand guilty for having forsaken the dynamic of their first love, for giving way to antinomianism, for causing others to stumble, for lapsing into spiritual death, and for a lack of spiritual vigor and zeal. The emphasis is placed upon overcoming such threats of evil.

Throughout the remainder of the Book a great many other attitudes and acts expressing these attitudes are mentioned which bring moral guilt. Of these several are worthy of note. First there is the proud attitude such as is illustrated best in Satan himself and in those who stand in closest relation to him. One of such a bent tends to put himself into the place which can be rightly assumed only by God, or claims for himself those rights which belong solely to God. All attention is turned inward to self. Refusing to recognize God as God, such a one rebels against God's purpose and its claims upon him. Then there is a perverted or deluded attitude in which something less than God or often evil itself is recognized as God by worship or by submission to it. This is illustrated in the sin of idolatry. (cf. 13:14,15; 21:8; 22:15). Another attitude ultimately bringing moral guilt is that of complacency such is reflected in failure to

repent and so to turn one's back toward evil when given opportunity or the tendency to lukewarmness which comes when attachment to things of lesser value becomes too great. Then there is the skeptical attitude such as is reflected in the fearful and the unbelieving; and the sensuous or careless attitude which is responsible for the sinful ways of those spoken of as abominable, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, and liars. Those who stand guilty of such sinfulness have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. (21:8). The more closely those who entertain such attitudes as are described above stand to God the more obvious and odious their guilt and the more defenseless they become. Each of these attitudes reveals an underlying moral disposition and a moral nature making such a self-determined disposition possible.

As related primarily to man and to the agents of evil, at least the immediate issue appears to revolve about the choice man makes of one to whom he may yield his allegience. Both God and Satan direct appeals for loyalty to man's moral nature as man is faced almost constantly with choice between good or evil.

<u>As related primarily to the character of God and to those acting in harmony with God's purpose</u>. The real roots of the conflict go beyond the grounds on which it is fought. While the issue from man's point of view is to choose

to give allegience and hence to become an ally either of the forces of good or of evil, from the point of view determined by God himself it is seen in a different light relative to his nature as holy and Almighty with ways true and righteous (15:3,4) and to that of Christ through whom he is revealed; as relative to his work with that of Christ as creator (10:6), ruler (1:5; 11:17; 19:16), and redeemer (1:5; 5:9; 7:14); and as relative to his final purpose as revealed in 21:1-22:5. When seen as conflict between God and Satan the issue takes on added perspective which is presented in The Revelation as ultimately relative to the character and purpose of God.

If the character of God and particularly his sovereignty be emphasized as is obviously in accordance with the major purpose of the book of The Revelation, then the conflict represents the rebellion of Satan and of all of his allies against the creator of all things who is not only superior to any other but is also the "Almighty." The conflict represents further the invasion of the rightful domain of God by him who has become an adversary to God. Will God allow his goodness and holiness to be trifled with by one hostile to the purpose which lies so very close to his very nature as does his purpose in creation? In this light the issue of the conflict is inseparable from the question of whether God will execute judgment upon the forces of rebellion and

in so doing unmistakably establish his own principles of justice, holiness, and love in the world order or whether he will allow his own character to be brought into disrepute by an inferior adversary who through deceitful and cunning devices seeks to establish himself as god of that God himself has created.

Then too the conflict must be seen in relation to the work of Christ in accomplishing the purpose of God. Christ is presented as one like unto a son of man in the midst of the churches and as the conquering king (cf. 1:13, 20:14-18); yet perhaps more often and more significantly he is to be seen as the Lamb, the sacrificial victim for sin. It was through his blood that these Christians were loosed from their sins. (cf. 1:5). The great multitude of the redeemed are spoken of as "they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (7:14). Only those who washed their robes have a right to enter into the holy city, and to partake of its privileges and glory. (22:14). Thus through Christ's sacrifice of himself for the sins of men a way is provided whereby those who avail themselves of his provision may be reconciled to and brought into fellowship with God so as to be saved from the destiny reserved for Satan and for all of his followers. Thus those who have become bondservants to Satan and sin have a choice presented them and a renewed

responsibility placed upon them by this provision for them to determine their own destiny. If God's purpose is to establish righteousness and if through Christ he has made adequate provision and extended a universal invitation to "come" and to "take of the water of life freely" then man must either accept or reject the purpose, the provision, and the entreaties bidding him to come. Would God abandon his purpose and in view of those who persisted in their rebellion against him leave the world of his creation to its own devices, or would he take further action to bring it into harmony with himself? Thus the activity of evil can be no less than the expression of neglect and of contempt for God's saving purpose.

The conflict, however, must be seen not only in terms of the nature of God and the provision which he has made for man but also in the light of the nature of the final goal as revealed in the two concluding chapters of The Revelation toward which his purpose has consistently directed attention. To accomplish this purpose and to achieve the goal described in this unit of action with which the Book closes all sin and evil must be put down by the execution of a righteous judgment. Until such is accomplished it would be as nearly impossible for a righteous and holy God to dwell with sin-loving persons as for those persons to enjoy real fellowship with a holy God.

Concerning the Nature of Evil

The point of reference. The conclusions drawn as to the nature of evil depend upon the point of reference from which it is seen. Each thinking individual determines his own point of reference by making that which he considers of supreme value the focal center in terms of which all else is evaluated. Hence if the universe is made this focal center or point of reference in terms of which evil is seen, evil would of logical necessity include anything which would tend to destroy or to pervert the natural order. Thus in The Revelation the description of unprecedented natural disorder would be the greatest of all evils possible. If man were inherently good and worthy of being made the central point of reference then human suffering and the thwarting of man's desires and purposes would be a logical criterian for determining the nature of evil. But in The Revelation man is not presented as inherently good. He is generally in his natural state seen as selfish and as entertaining selfish motives. He is perhaps even more easily deceived by the devices of Satan than won by the entreaties of God. To bring himself into harmony with God he must "wash his robe" in the blood of the Lamb (7:14, 22:14) and have his name written in the Lamb's book of life (20:15), but to be on the side of Satan he need only follow the course presented to him as that bringing least resistance. (13:8,15-18). Thus man is not

presented as the point of reference from which evil is to be determined. If he were this point of reference, the picture would be one of chronic confusion. The selfish claims of man are seen in The Revelation as conflicting and as conducive to producing a condition such that any execution of justice, delayed as it may be, is seen as evil. In The Revelation, however, God is with unmistakable clarity presented as that rightful point or reference by which the nature of evil may be determined. As was noted, when evil is seen in view of God's sovereignty it can be identified as nothing short of open and organized rebellion against God. Only in the light of God's full revelation of himself, of his saving purpose as brought to man through Christ, and of the goal of that purpose can the complete picture of evil be gained and its utter repulsiveness be realized.

The element of contrast. The point of reference from which evil is determined, and the irreconcilable alternatives between which men of earth must choose are factors of special significance in setting forth by means of the element of contrast further aspects of the nature of evil. Apparently in deliberate contrast but yet in subtle and cunning imitation of the nature, position, and organization of the forces of good are those of evil. As opposed to the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a trinity of evil made up of Satan himself, the beast, and the false prophet who like

the leaders of the forces of God are presented as personal agents endowed with great power to think and to do according to their own devising. In contrast to the kingdom of God is the kingdom of evil skilfully organized with Satan at its head and acting in the power and authority of Satan, the beast and the false prophet. As opposed to the armies of God and of Christ are the armies of Satan, the beast, and the false prophet. (cf. 12:7; 16:14; 19:19). Many attempts have been made to identify the beast and the false prophet with figures both in Roman history and in modern society. It is the opinion of the present writer, however, that the position these hold in relation to the dragon (Satan), to man in general, and to the forces of good rather than any forced identification with certain persons is the point where the greater emphasis must be placed.

Then also in contrast to the worship of God and of Christ through whose blood came redemption (5:9) and who overcame death (1:8) is worship of Satan and of the beast who was smitten unto death but whose death stroke was healed. (cf. 13:3,4). Instead of the seal of God upon the righteous (cf. 7:2; 9:4) is the mark of the beast upon those who do not refuse the ways of evil. (13:16-18). In contrast to the woman bringing forth the man child who is to rule the nations (12:5) is the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters being carried by the beast (17:1-3), and as over against the

city of Jerusalem later appearing as the holy city is the wicked city called Babylon where evil is in complete control. Hence evil is not only rebellion against God but it is rebellion organized after the pattern of but yet in direct contrast to the purpose of the kingdom of God. Evil seeks to appeal to man's most noble endowments by its imitation of good yet its basic nature is such that it uses every possible occasion where a successful perversion of the truth may be staged.

The activity of evil. In treating the dramatic development of the conflict special attention was given to considering the activity of evil and its strategy and tactics. It is to be noted in summary that in making an attack all scruples except those imposed from without are set aside according to the expediency of the situation. Various such inherently deceitful approaches as those previously noted and characterized by subtle suggestion, skilled diplomacy, colorful propaganda, alluring enchantments, compelling decrees, and open warfare are used during the course of the conflict by evil to press its claims and to attain its ends.

Therefore in The Revelation evil is not presented as merely passive resistance to progress or as incomplete good but as an active aggressive kingdom headed by Satan the archenemy of God and of all who would be loyal to the purpose of God. Whether it be because of the nature of evil itself

attempting to compensate for an increasing consciousness of inferiority or the nature of the appointed destiny it is significant to note that the fierceness of the attack made by evil against all who do not fall into harmony with its designs increases as its agents approach final judgment. In the earlier stages of the conflict they work under cover much of the time but as the conflict proceeds the issue between God and Satan becomes more clearly marked and evil enters open conflict. Yet there is no suggestion of voluntary surrender even though Satan realizes his ultimate inability to resist the power of God. Apparently any attempts at compromise on his part would be in vain; hence he fights it out to the bitter end.

The origin of evil. As to the origin of evil little is said in The Revelation. For the most part its existence is simply assumed. Yet in reference to the origin of evil the relevant facts presented in the Book itself will be summarized and a logical inference will be suggested on the basis of these facts.

In contrast to the beast and the false prophet who are said to come up out of the sea and out of the earth is the dragon who is said to have been cast down to the earth by the angels of heaven of whom Michael was the leader. This great dragon is unmistakably identified by the Apocalyptist with Satan, also with the "old serpent" of Genesis 3, and with the

one called "the Devil." He is described as the deceiver of the whole world and by a voice from heaven as "the accuser of our brethren . . . who accuseth them before our God day and night." He bears marks of royalty, authority, and of power as well as an abiding grudge and an enraged attitude irreconcilable toward God. (cf. 12:3,8-12; also Luke 10:18). The opening verses of chapter 12 imply that Satan was at least dwelling among the heavenly beings before he began his activity on earth.

It has also been seen, judging from the point of view which recognizes God as the central point of reference, that evil is basically to be recognized as rebellion against the sovereign character and purpose of God. A glance at the activity of Satan is sufficient to show that he possessed super-human abilities by which he could transcend space as do the angels and exert power and use methods beyond the ability of man to comprehend.

From these facts presented in The Revelation it seems to the present writer that the most logical inference is that Satan was a being created by God and endowed by him with moral status and with the ability to perform a significant role in the purpose of God among his fellow-creatures in the universe. Like men on earth who choose to rebel against their creator to whose good pleasure they owe their moral status, Satan may have become not only the first rebel but

also the leader and propagator of rebellion against God. Yet no dogmatic conclusions are possible at this point, nor are they necessary to man's salvation--helpful as they might be in bringing satisfaction to his curiosity.

The limitation of evil. While evil appears to have super-human power at its command it does work under some clearly marked limitations. The simple fact of the imitation of the organization of the kingdom of God suggests limitation and ultimate subordination to good. In chapter 7 and throughout the development of the conflict those who have been sealed by God are protected by very strict limitations upon evil imposed at God's command. With the loosing of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the bowls there comes punishment of increasing severity upon evil from God. Great control on the part of God, however, is shown in the execution of this punishment and accompanying destruction. The powers of evil are helpless to defend themselves against this mighty judgment of God whereas God takes special care that those who bear his seal are protected from such plagues as that of the locusts which are released out of the abyss at the sounding of the fifth trumpet.

The aggressive acts of evil are also under the control of God. The holy city is to be trodden under foot forty-two months. (11:2). The two witnesses are protected

by God from threats of evil until they have finished their work. Even after temporary defeat in death, after three days and a half "the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them." (11:11). Not only were those allied with evil affrighted but despite their persistent rebellion they also gave glory to the God of heaven. Though the dragon viciously attempts to overcome the woman and to devour the man child, he is unable. God intervenes in behalf both of the man child and of the woman; hence Satan's designs are defeated. (12:4-6). Despite the false claims of the beast and the false prophet and the authority they exercised they were unable to compel those whose names were written in the book of life of the Lamb to render worship to them. The beast-harlot alliance of chapter 17 is finally split and the aggressive disposition of one faction is turned against that of the other because "God did put in their hearts to do his mind." (17:17).

The destiny of evil. Not only is the essential limitation of Satan and hence of evil to be seen in terms of his activity but even more striking is the limitation of Satan when seen in the light of the ultimate destiny to which he against his own will must go. If Satan were originally a creature of heaven and from heaven was cast down to the earth (12:8-12), then from the earth submitted to

being bound and cast into the abyss (20:1-3), and finally from the abyss to be cast into the lake of fire in the company of his cohorts and those deceived through him, no other explanation is possible than that he and his allies with him were forced to recognize their own essential limitation and to accept involuntarily the final destiny prepared for them and meted out to them by another.

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